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NEWTON'S WORKS.

THE

WORKS

OF

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THE REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW, LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, BY THE REV. R. CECIL; A.M.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

London:
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1853

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MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

PREFACE.

THE Memoirs of the Hon. and Rev. William Bromley Cadogan, and those of John Bacon, Esq. were written at the particular request of their relations. But in publishing these of the late Rev. JOHN NEWTON, I profess myself a volunteer; and my motives were the following:—When I perceived my venerable friend bending under a weight of years, and considered how soon, from the very course of nature, the world must lose so valuable an instructor and example; when I reflected how common it is for hasty and inaccurate accounts of extraordinary characters to be obtruded on the public by venal writers, whenever more authentic documents are wanting; above all, when I considered how striking a display such a life affords of the nature of true religion, of the power of divine grace, of the mysterious but all-wise course of divine providence, and of the encouragement afforded for our dependence upon that providence in the most trying circumstances; I say, on these accounts I felt, that the leading features of such a character should not be neglected, whilst it was easy to authenticate them correctly.

Besides which, I have observed a want of books of a certain class for young people; and have often been inquired of by Christian parents for publications that might amuse their families, and yet tend to promote their best interests. The number, however, of this kind which I have seen, and that appear-

ed unexceptionable, is but small: For, as the characters and sentiments of some men become moral blights in society, men whose mouths seldom open but, like that of sepulchres, they discover the putridity they contain, and infect more or less whoever ventures within their baneful influence; so the reformed subject of these Memoirs was happily a remarkable instance of the reverse. The change that took place in his heart, after such a course of profligacy, affords a convincing demonstration of the truth and force of Christianity. Instead of proceeding as a blight in society, he became a blessing; his future course was a striking example of the beneficial effects of the Gospel; and that, not only from the pulpit and by his pen, but also by his conversation in the large circle of his acquaintance, of which there is, yet living, a multitude of witnesses.

Impressed, therefore, with the advantages which I conceived would result from the publication of these Memoirs, I communicated my design some years ago to Mr N. Whatever tended to promote that cause in which his heart had been long engaged, I was sure would not fail to obtain his concurrence. He accordingly promised to afford whatever materials might be necessary, beyond those which his printed Narrative contained. He promised also to read over and revise whatever was added from my own observation; and he soon after brought me an Account in writing, containing every thing memorable which he recollected before the commencement of his Narrative. I shall, therefore, detain the reader no longer than to assure him, that the whole of the following Memoirs (except what relates to Mr N.'s character) was submitted to him in MS., while he was capable of correcting it, and received his sanction.

MEMOIRS,

&c. &c.

THESE Memoirs seem naturally to commence with the Account mentioned in the Preface, and which I here transcribe:—

"I was born in London, the 24th of July, 1725, old style. My parents, though not wealthy, were respectable. My father was many years master of a ship in the Mediterranean trade. In the year 1748 he went Governor of York Fort, in Hudson's Bay, where he died in the year 1750.

"My mother was a Dissenter, a pious woman, and a member of the late Dr Jenning's church. She was of a weak, consumptive habit, and loved retirement; and as I was her only child, she made it the chief business and pleasure of her life to instruct me, and bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I have been told, that from my birth she had, in her mind, devoted me to the ministry; and that, had she lived till I was of a proper age, I was to have been sent to St Andrews, in Scotland, to be educated. But the Lord had appointed otherwise. My mother died before I was seven years of age.

"I was rather of a sedentary turn, not active and playful, as boys commonly are, but seemed as willing to learn as my mother was to teach me. I had some capacity, and a retentive memory. When I was four years old, I could read (hard names excepted) as well as I can now; and could likewise repeat the answers to the questions in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, with the proofs; and all Dr Watts' smaller Catechisms, and his Children's Hymns.

"When my father returned from sea, after my mother's death, he ried again. My new mother was the daughter of a substantial gra- at Aveley in Essex. She seemed willing to adopt and bring me but, after two or three years, she had a son of her own, who en- sed the old gentleman's notice. My father was a very sensible and oral man, as the world rates morality, but neither he nor my step- her were under the impressions of religion; I was, therefore, much to myself, to mingle with idle and wicked boys, and soon learnt ways.

"I never was at school but about two years (from my eighth to my tenth year); it was a boarding-school at Stratford in Essex. Though my father left me much to run about the streets, yet, when under his eye, he kept me at a great distance. I am persuaded he loved me, but he seemed not willing that I should know it. I was with him in a state of fear and bondage. His sternness, together with the severity of my schoolmaster, broke and overawed my spirit, and almost made me a dolt; so that part of the two years I was at school, instead of making progress, I nearly forgot all my good mother had taught me.

"The day I was eleven years old, I went on board my father's ship in Longreach. I made five voyages with him to the Mediterranean. In the course of the last voyage, he left me some months at Alicant in Spain, with a merchant, a particular friend of his, with whom I might have done well, if I had behaved well. But by this time my sinful propensities had gathered strength by habit: I was very wicked, and therefore very foolish; and, being my own enemy, I seemed determined that nobody should be my friend.

"My father left the sea in the year 1742. I made one voyage afterwards to Venice before the mast; and soon after my return, was impressed on board the Harwich. Then began my awfully mad career, as recorded in the Narrative; to which, and to the Letters to a Wife, I must refer you for any farther dates and incidents.

"I am truly yours,

"JOHN NEWTON.

"DEC. 19, 1795."

A few articles may be added to this account from the Narrative, where we find, that his pious mother "stored his memory with whole chapters, and smaller portions of Scripture, catechisms, hymns, and poems; and often commended him with prayers and tears to God:" also, that in his sixth year he began to learn Latin, though the intended plan of his education was soon broken; and that he lost this valuable parent, July 11, 1732.

We also find, that, after his father's second marriage, he was sent to the school above mentioned, and in the last of the two years he spent there, a new usher came, who, observing and suiting his temper, he prosecuted Latin with great eagerness, and before he was ten years old, he had reached and maintained the first post in the second class, which, in that school, was Tully and Virgil. But by being pushed forward too fast, and not properly grounded (a method too common in inferior schools), he soon lost all he had learned.

In the next and most remarkable period of Mr N.'s life, we must be conducted by the Narrative above mentioned. It has been observed, that at eleven years of age he was taken by his father to sea. His father was a man of remarkably good sense, and great knowledge of the world; he took much care of his son's morals, but could not supply a mother's part. The father had been educated at a Jesuits' college, near Seville in Spain, and had an air of such distance and severity in his carriage as discouraged his son, who always was in fear, when before

him, and which deprived him of that influence he might otherwise have had.

From this time to the year 1742, Mr N. made several voyages, but at considerable intervals: these intervals were chiefly spent in the country, excepting a few months in his fifteenth year, when he was placed, with a very advantageous prospect, at Alicant, already mentioned.

About this period of his life, with a temper and conduct exceedingly various, he was often disturbed with religious convictions; and being from a child fond of reading, he met with Bennet's "Christian Oratory:" and though he understood little of it, the course of life it recommended, appeared very desirable. He therefore began to pray, to read the Scriptures, to keep a diary, and thought himself religious; but soon became weary of it, and gave it up. He then learned to curse and to blaspheme, and was exceedingly wicked when out of the view of his parents, though at so early a period.

Upon his being thrown from a horse near a dangerous hedge-row, newly cut, his conscience suggested to him the dreadful consequences of appearing in such a state before God. This put him, though but for a time, upon breaking off his profane practices; but the consequence of these struggles between sin and conscience was, that on every relapse he sunk into still greater depths of wickedness. He was roused again by the loss of a companion, who had agreed to go with him one Sunday on board a man-of-war. Mr N. providentially coming too late, the boat had gone without him, and was overset, by which his companion and several others were drowned. He was exceedingly affected at the funeral of this companion, to think, that by the delay of a few minutes (which at the time occasioned much anger) his life had been preserved: but this also was soon forgotten. The perusal of the "Family Instructor" produced another temporary reformation. In short, he took up and laid aside a religious profession three or four different times before he was sixteen years of age.

"All this while," says he, "my heart was insincere; I often saw the necessity of religion, as a means of escaping hell, but I loved sin, and was unwilling to forsake it. I was so strangely blind and stupid, that sometimes, when I have been determined upon things, which I knew were sinful, I could not go on quietly till I had first dispatched my ordinary task of prayer, in which I have grudged every moment of the time; when this was finished, my conscience was in some measure pacified, and I could rush into folly with little remorse."

But his last reform was the most remarkable. "Of this period," ys he, "at least of some part of it, I may say in the apostle's words, After the strictest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.' I did ry thing that might be expected from a person entirely ignorant God's righteousness, and desirous to establish his own. I spent the eatest part of every day in reading the Scriptures, and in meditation l prayer. I fasted often: I even abstained from all animal food for ee months. I would hardly answer a question, for fear of speaking idle word. I seemed to bemoan my former miscarriages very earstly, and sometimes with tears: in short, I became an ascetic, and

and endeavoured, as far as my situation would permit, to renounce society, that I might avoid temptation."

This reformation, it seems, continued for more than two years. "But," he adds, "it was a poor religion; it left me in many respects under the power of sin; and, so far as it prevailed, only tended to make me gloomy, stupid, unsociable, and useless."

That it was a poor religion, and quite unlike that which he afterwards possessed, will appear from what immediately follows: for had it been taken up upon more scriptural ground, and been attended with that internal evidence and satisfaction, which true religion only brings, he could not so soon have fallen a dupe to such a writer as Shaftesbury. It was at a petty shop at Middleburgh, in Holland, that he first met with a volume of the Characteristics. The declamation, called by his Lordship a Rhapsody, suited the romantic turn of his mind. Unaware of its tendency, he imagined he had found a valuable guide. This book was always in his hand, till he could nearly repeat the Rhapsody. Though it produced no immediate effect, it operated like a slow poison, and prepared the way for all that followed.

About the year 1742, having lately come from a voyage, his father, not intending to return to sea, was contriving for Mr N.'s settlement in the world. But to settle a youth, who had no spirit for business, who knew but little of men or things, who was of a romantic turn—a medley, as he expressed it, of religion, philosophy, and indolence, and quite averse to order—must prove a great difficulty. At length a merchant in Liverpool, an intimate friend of the father, and afterwards a singular friend to the son, offered to send him for some years to Jamaica, and undertook the charge of his future welfare. This was consented to, and preparation made for the voyage, which was to be prosecuted the following week. In the mean time, he was sent by his father, on some business, to a place, a few miles beyond Maidstone in Kent. But the journey, which was designed to last but three or four days, gave such a turn to his mind as roused him from his habitual indolence, and produced a series of important and interesting occurrences.

A few days before this intended journey, he received an invitation to visit some distant relations in Kent. They were particular friends of his mother, who died at their house; but a coolness having taken place upon his father's second marriage, all intercourse between them had ceased. As his road lay within half a mile of the house, and he obtained his father's leave to call on them, he went thither, and met with the kindest reception from these friends. They had two daughters: it seems the elder had been intended, by both the mothers, for his future wife. Almost at the first sight of this girl, then under fourteen years of age, he was impressed with such an affection for her, as appears to have equalled all that the writers of romance have imagined.

"I soon lost," says he, "all sense of religion, and became deaf to the remonstrances of conscience and prudence, but my regard for her was always the same; and I may, perhaps, venture to say, that none

of the scenes of misery and wickedness I afterwards experienced, ever banished her a single hour together from my waking thoughts for the seven following years."

His heart being now riveted to a particular object, every thing with which he was concerned appeared in a new light. He could not now bear the thought of living at such a distance as Jamaica, for four or five years, and therefore determined not to go thither. He dared not communicate with his father on this point, but, instead of three days, he staid three weeks in Kent, till the ship had sailed, and then he returned to London. His father, though highly displeased, became reconciled, and in a little time he sailed with a friend of his father's to Venice.

In this voyage, being a common sailor, and exposed to the company of his comrades, he began to relax from the sobriety which he had preserved, in some degree, for more than two years. Sometimes, pierced with convictions, he made a few faint efforts, as formerly, to stop; and though not yet absolutely profligate, he was making large strides towards a total apostacy from God. At length he received a remarkable check by a dream, which made a very strong, though not abiding, impression upon his mind.

I shall relate this dream in his own words, referring to the Narrative those who wish to know his opinion of dreams, and his application of this one in particular to his own circumstances:—

"The scene presented to my imagination was the harbour of Venice, where we had lately been. I thought it was night, and my watch upon the deck; and that, as I was walking to and fro by myself, a person came to me (I do not remember from whence) and brought me a ring, with an express charge to keep it carefully; assuring me, that while I preserved that ring I should be happy and successful: but, if I lost or parted with it, I must expect nothing but trouble and misery. I accepted the present and the terms willingly, not in the least doubting my own care to preserve it, and highly satisfied to have my happiness in my own keeping. I was engaged in these thoughts, when a second person came to me, and, observing the ring on my finger, took occasion to ask me some questions concerning it. I readily told him its virtues; and his answer expressed a surprise at my weakness, in expecting such effects from a ring. I think he reasoned with me some time, upon the impossibility of the thing; and at length urged me, in direct terms to throw it away. At first I was shocked at the proposal, but his insinuations prevailed. I began to reason and doubt, and at last plucked it off my finger, and dropped it over the ship's side into the ter, which it had no sooner touched than I saw, at the same instant, errible fire burst out from a range of mountains (a part of the Alps), ich appeared at some distance behind the city of Venice. I saw the ls as distinct as if awake, and that they were all in flames. I perved, too late, my folly; and my tempter, with an air of insult inmed me, that all the mercy God had in reserve for me was comsed in that ring, which I had wilfully thrown away. I understood, t I must now go with him to the burning mountains, and that all

the flames I saw were kindled on my account. I trembled, and was in a great agony; so that it was surprising I did not then awake: but my dream continued, and when I thought myself upon the point of a constrained departure, and stood self-condemned, without plea or hope, suddenly either a third person, or the same who brought the ring at first (I am not certain which), came to me, and demanded the cause of my grief. I told him the plain case, confessing that I had ruined myself wilfully, and deserved no pity. He blamed my rashness, and asked if I should be wiser, supposing I had my ring again. I could hardly answer to this, for I thought it was gone beyond recal. I believe, indeed, I had not time to answer, before I saw this unexpected friend go down under the water, just in the spot where I had dropped it, and he soon returned, bringing the ring with him: the moment he came on board, the flames in the mountains were extinguished, and my seducer left me. Then was 'the prey taken from the hand of the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered.' My fears were at an end, and with joy and gratitude I approached my kind deliverer to receive the ring again; but he refused to return it, and spoke to this effect: 'If you should be intrusted with this ring again, you would very soon bring yourself into the same distress; you are not able to keep it, but I will preserve it for you, and whenever it is needful will produce it in your behalf.' Upon this I awoke, in a state of mind not to be described: I could hardly eat, or sleep, or transact my necessary business for two or three days; but the impression soon wore off, and in a little time I totally forgot it; and I think it hardly occurred to my mind again till several years afterwards."

Nothing remarkable happened in the following part of that voyage. Mr N. returned home in December, 1743, and, repeating his visit to Kent, protracted his stay in the same imprudent manner he had done before. This so disappointed his father's designs for his interest, as almost induced him to disown his son. Before any thing suitable offered again, this thoughtless son, unmindful of the consequences of appearing in a check shirt, was marked by a lieutenant of the Harwich man-of-war, who immediately impressed and carried him on board a tender. This was at a critical juncture, as the French fleets were hovering upon our coast: so that his father was incapable of procuring his release. A few days after, he was sent on board the Harwich at the Nore. Here a new scene of life was presented, and for about a month much hardship endured. As a war was daily expected, his father was willing he should remain in the navy, and procured him a recommendation to the captain, who sent him upon the quarter-deck as a midshipman. He might now have had ease and respect, had it not been for his unsettled mind and indifferent behaviour. The companions he met with here completed the ruin of his principles; though he affected to talk of virtue, and preserved some decency, yet his delight and habitual practice was wickedness.

His principal companion was a person of talents and observation, an expert and plausible infidel, whose zeal was equal to his address. "I have been told," says Mr N., "that afterwards he was overtaken in a

voyage from Lisbon in a violent storm; the vessel and people escaped, but a great sea broke on board, and swept him into eternity." Being fond of this man's company, Mr N. aimed to discover what smattering of reading he had: his companion, observing that Mr N. had not lost all the restraints of conscience, at first spoke in favour of religion; and having gained Mr N.'s confidence, and perceiving his attachment to the Characteristics, he soon convinced his pupil that he had never understood that book. By objections and arguments Mr N.'s depraved heart was soon gained. He plunged into infidelity with all his spirit; and, like an unwary sailor, who quits his post just before a rising storm, the hopes and comforts of the Gospel were renounced at the very time when every other comfort was about to fail.

In December 1744, the Harwich was in the Downs, bound to the East Indies. The captain gave Mr N. leave to go on shore for a day; but, with his usual inconsideration, and following the dictates of a restless passion, he went to take a last leave of the object with which he was so infatuated. Little satisfaction attended the interview in such circumstances, and on new-year's day he returned to the ship. The captain was so highly displeased at this rash step, that it occasioned ever after the loss of his favour.

At length they sailed from Spithead, with a very large fleet. They put into Torbay, with a change of wind, but sailed the next day, on its becoming fair. Several of the fleet were lost at leaving the place, but the following night the whole fleet was greatly endangered upon the coast of Cornwall, by a storm from the southward. The ship on which Mr N was aboard escaped unhurt, though several times in danger of being run down by other vessels; but many suffered much: this occasioned their putting back to Plymouth.

While they lay at Plymouth, Mr N. heard that his father, who had an interest in some of the ships lately lost, was come down to Torbay. He thought, that, if he could see his father, he might easily be introduced into a service which would be better than pursuing a long and uncertain voyage to the East Indies. It was his habit in those unhappy days, never to deliberate; as soon as the thought occurred, he resolved to leave the ship at all events: he did so, and in the worst manner possible. He was sent one day in the boat to prevent others from desertion, but betrayed his trust, and deserted himself. Not knowing which road to take, and fearing to inquire, lest he should be suspected, yet having some general idea of the country, he found, after he had travelled some miles, that he was on the road to Dartmouth. That day, and part of the next, every thing seemed to go on smoothly. I walked fast, and thought to have seen his father in about two hours, when he was met by a small party of soldiers, whom he could not avoid to receive: they brought him back to Plymouth, through the streets which he proceeded guarded like a felon. Full of indignation, rage, and fear, he was confined two days in the guard-house, then on ship-board, and kept a while in irons; next he was publicly put and whipt, degraded from his office, and all his former companions forbidden to show him the least favour, or even to speak to him.

As midshipman he had been entitled to command, in which (being sufficiently haughty and vain) he had not been temperate; but was now in his turn brought down to a level with the lowest, and exposed to the insults of all.

The state of his mind at this time can only be properly expressed in his own words:—

"As my present situation was uncomfortable, my future prospects were still worse; the evils I suffered were likely to grow heavier every day. While my catastrophe was recent, the officers and my quondam brethren were somewhat disposed to screen me from ill usage; but during the little time I remained with them afterwards, I found them cool very fast in their endeavours to protect me. Indeed, they could not avoid such conduct, without running a great risk of sharing with me: for the captain, though in general a humane man, who behaved very well to the ship's company, was almost implacable in his resentment, and took several occasions to show it, and the voyage was expected to be (as it proved) for five years. Yet nothing I either felt or feared distressed me so much, as to see myself thus forcibly torn away from the object of my affections, under a great improbability of seeing her again, and a much greater, of returning in such a manner as would give me hope of seeing her mine.

"Thus I was as miserable on all hands, as could well be imagined. My breast was filled with the most excruciating passions, eager desire, bitter rage, and black despair. Every hour exposed me to some new insult and hardship, with no hope of relief or mitigation; no friend to take my part, nor to listen to my complaint. Whether I looked inward or outward, I could perceive nothing but darkness and misery. I think no case, except that of a conscience wounded by the wrath of God, could be more dreadful than mine. I cannot express with what wishfulness and regret I cast my last looks upon the English shore; I kept my eyes fixed upon it, till, the ship's distance increasing, it insensibly disappeared; and, when I could see it no longer, I was tempted to throw myself into the sea, which (according to the wicked system I had adopted) would put a period to all my sorrows at once. But the secret hand of God restrained me."

During his passage to Madeira, Mr N. describes himself as a prey to the most gloomy thoughts; though he had deserved all, and more than all he had met with from the captain, yet pride suggested that he had been grossly injured; "and this so far," says he, "wrought upon my wicked heart, that I actually formed designs against his life, and that was one reason which made me willing to prolong my own. I was sometimes divided between the two, not thinking it practicable to effect both. The Lord had now to appearance given me up to judicial hardness; I was capable of any thing. I had not the least fear of God before my eyes, nor (so far as I remember) the least sensibility of conscience. I was possessed with so strong a spirit of delusion, that I believed my own lie, and was firmly persuaded, that after death I should cease to be. Yet the Lord preserved me! Some intervals of sober reflection would at times take place: when I have chosen death rather

than life, a ray of hope would come in (though there was little probability for such a hope) that I should yet see better days, that I might return to England, and have my wishes crowned, if I did not wilfully throw myself away. In a word, my love to Mrs N. was now the only restraint I had left: though I neither feared God, nor regarded man, I could not bear that she should think meanly of me when I was dead."

Mr N. had been at Madeira some time; and the business of the fleet being now completed, they were to sail the following day. On that memorable morning he happened to be late in bed, and would have continued to sleep, but that an old companion, a midshipman, came down, between jest and earnest, and bid him rise. As he did not immediately comply, the midshipman cut down the hammock in which he lay: this obliged him to dress himself; and though very angry, he durst not resent it, but was little aware that this person, without design, was a special instrument of God's providence. Mr N. said little, but went upon deck, where he saw a man putting his clothes into a boat, who informed him he was going to leave the ship. Upon inquiry, he found that two men from a Guinea ship, which lay near them, had entered on board the Harwich, and that the commodore (the late Sir George Pocock) had ordered the captain to send two others in their room. Inflamed with this information, Mr N. requested that the boat might be detained a few minutes; he then entreated the lieutenants to intercede with the captain, that he might be dismissed upon this occasion: though he had formerly behaved ill to these officers, they were moved with pity, and were disposed to serve him. The captain, who had refused to exchange him at Plymouth, though requested by Admiral Medley, was easily prevailed with now. In little more than half an hour from his being asleep in bed, he found himself discharged, and safe on board another ship. The events depending upon this change will show it to have been the most critical and important.

The ship he now entered was bound to Sierra Leone, and the adjacent parts of what is called the windward coast of Africa. The commander knew his father—received him kindly—and made professions of assistance; and probably would have been his friend, if, instead of profiting by his former errors, he had not pursued a course, if possible, worse. He was under some restraint on board the Harwich, but being now among strangers, he could sin without disguise. "I well remember," says he, "that while I was passing from the one ship to the other, I rejoiced in the exchange, with this reflection, that I might now be as abandoned as I pleased, without any control; and from this time was exceedingly vile indeed, little, if any thing, short of that animated description of an almost irrecoverable state, which we have in 2 Pet. 14. I not only sinned with a high hand myself, but made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion: nay, I eagerly sought occasion, sometimes to my own hazard and hurt." By this conduct he soon forfeited the favour of his captain: for, besides being careless and disobedient, upon some imagined affront, he employed his

mischievous wit in making a song to ridicule the captain as to his ship, his designs, and his person; and he taught it to the whole ship's company.

He thus proceeded for about six months, at which time the ship was preparing to leave the coast; but, a few days before she sailed, the captain died. Mr N. was not upon much better terms with his mate, who succeeded to the command, and upon some occasion had treated him ill. He felt certain, that, if he went in the ship to the West Indies, the mate would have put him on board a man-of-war, a consequence more dreadful to him than death itself: to avoid this, he determined to remain in Africa, and pleased himself with imagining it would be an opportunity of improving his fortune.

Upon that part of the coast there were a few white men settled, whose business it was to purchase slaves, &c., and sell them to the ships at an advanced price: one of these, who had first landed in circumstances similar to Mr N.'s, had acquired considerable wealth. This man had been in England, and was returning in the same vessel with Mr N., of which he owned a quarter part. His example impressed Mr N. with hopes of the same success, and he obtained his discharge, upon condition of entering into the trader's service, to whose generosity he trusted without the precaution of terms. He received, however, no compensation for his time on board the ship, but a bill upon the owners in England, who failing before his return, the bill was never paid; the day, therefore, on which the vessel sailed, he landed upon the island of Benanoes like one shipwrecked, with little more than the clothes upon his back.

"The two following years," says he, "of which I am now to give some account, will seem as an absolute blank in my life: but I have seen frequent cause since to admire the mercy of God in banishing me to those distant parts, and almost excluding me from all society, at a time when I was big with mischief, and, like one infected with a pestilence, was capable of spreading a taint wherever I went. But the Lord wisely placed me where I could do little harm. The few I had to converse with were too much like myself; and I was soon brought into such abject circumstances that I was too low to have any influence. I was rather shunned and despised than imitated, there being few, even of the Negroes themselves, during the first year of my residence, but thought themselves too good to speak to me. I was as yet an outcast ready to perish, but the Lord beheld me with mercy—he even now bid me live; and I can only ascribe it to his secret upholding power, that what I suffered, in a part of this interval, did not bereave me either of my life or senses."

The reader will have a better idea of the situation Mr N. was now in by his brief sketch of it.—

"From Cape de Verd, the most western point of Africa, to Cape Mount, the whole coast is full of rivers: the principal are the Gambia, Rio Grande, Sierra Leone, and Sherbro. Of the former, as it is well known, and as I was never there, I need say nothing. The Rio Grande (like the Nile) divides into many branches near the sea. On the

most northerly, called Cacheo, the Portuguese have a settlement. The most southern branch, known by the name of Rio Nuna, is, or was, the usual boundary of the white men's trade northward. Sierra Leone is a mountainous peninsula, uninhabited, and I believe inaccessible, upon account of the thick woods, excepting those parts which lie near the water. The river is large and navigable. From hence about twelve leagues to the south-east are three contiguous islands, called the Bananoes, twenty miles in circuit: this was about the centre of the white men's residence. Seven leagues farther, the same way, lie the Plantanes, three small islands, two miles distant from the continent, at the point which forms one side of the Sherbro. This river is more properly a sound, running within a long island, and receiving the confluence of several large rivers, 'rivers unknown to song,' but far more deeply engraven in my remembrance than the Po or Tiber. The southernmost of these has a very peculiar course, almost parallel to the coast: so that in tracing it a great many leagues upwards, it will seldom lead one above three miles, and sometimes not more than half a mile from the sea shore."

Mr N.'s new master had resided near Cape Mount, but at this time had settled at the Plantanes, on the largest of the three islands. It is low and sandy, about two miles in circumference, and almost covered with palm-trees. They immediately began to build a house. Mr N. had some desire to retrieve his time and character, and might have lived tolerably well with his master, if this man had not been much under the direction of a black woman, who lived with him as a wife, and influenced him against his new servant. She was a person of some consequence in her own country, and he owed his first rise to her interest. This woman, for reasons not known, was strangely prejudiced against Mr N. from the first; he also had unhappily a severe fit of illness, which attacked him before he had an opportunity to show what he could or would do in the service of his master. Mr N. was sick when his master sailed in a shallop to Rio Nuna, and was left in the hands of this woman. He was taken some care of at first, but not soon recovering, her attention was wearied, and she entirely neglected him. Sometimes it was with difficulty he could procure a draught of cold water when burning with a fever! His bed was a mat, spread upon a board or chest, with a log for his pillow. Upon his appetite returning, after the fever left him, he would gladly have eaten, but "no one gave unto him." She lived in plenty, but scarcely allowed him sufficient to sustain life, except now and then, when in the highest good humour, she would send him victuals in her own plate after she had dined. And this (so greatly was he humbled) he received with thanks and eagerness, as the most needy beggar does an alms.

"Once," says he, "I well remember, I was called to receive this dainty from her own hand, but, being exceedingly weak and feeble, I dropped the plate. Those who live in plenty can hardly conceive how the loss touched me: but she had the cruelty to laugh at my disappointment, and though the table was covered with dishes (for she lived much in the European manner) she refused to give me any more.

My distress has been at times so great as to compel me to go by night, and pull up roots in the plantation (though at the risk of being punished as a thief), which I have eaten raw upon the spot for fear of discovery. The roots I speak of are very wholesome food, when boiled or roasted, but as unfit to be eaten raw in any quantity as a potatoe. The consequence of this diet, which after the first experiment I always expected, and seldom missed, was the same as if I had taken tartar emetic; so that I have often returned as empty as I went, yet necessity urged me to repeat the trial several times. I have sometimes been relieved by strangers; yea, even by the slaves in the chain, who have secretly brought me victuals (for they durst not be seen to do it) from their own slender pittance. Next to pressing want, nothing sits harder upon the mind than scorn and contempt, and of this likewise I had an abundant measure."

When slowly recovering, the same woman would sometimes pay Mr N. a visit, not to pity or relieve, but to insult him. She would call him worthless and indolent, and compel him to walk; which, when he could scarcely do, she would set her attendants to mimic his motions, to clap their hands, laugh, throw limes at him, and sometimes they would even throw stones. But though her attendants were forced to join in this treatment, Mr N. was rather pitied than scorned, by the meanest of her slaves, on her departure.

When his master returned from the voyage, Mr N. complained of ill usage, but was not credited, and as he did it in her hearing, he fared worse for it. He accompanied his master in his second voyage, and they agreed pretty well, till his master was persuaded by a brother trader, that Mr N. was dishonest. This seems to be the only vice he could not be charged with, as his honesty seemed to be the last remains of a good education which he could now boast of: and though his great distress might have been a strong temptation to fraud, it seems he never once thought of defrauding his master in the smallest matter. The charge, however, was believed, and he was condemned without evidence. From that time he was used very hardly; whenever his master left the vessel, he was locked upon deck with a pint of rice for his day's allowance, nor had he any relief till his master's return. "Indeed," says he, "I believe I should have been nearly starved, but for an opportunity of catching fish sometimes. When fowls were killed for my master's own use, I seldom was allowed any part but the entrails, to bait my hooks with: and at what we called slack-water, that is, about the changing of the tides, when the current was still, I used generally to fish (for at other times it was not practicable), and I very often succeeded. If I saw a fish upon my hook, my joy was little less than any other person would have found in the accomplishment of the scheme he had most at heart. Such a fish hastily broiled, or rather half burnt, without sauce, salt, or bread, has afforded me a delicious meal. If I caught none, I might, if I could, sleep away my hunger till the next return of slack-water, and then try again.

"Nor did I suffer less from the inclemency of the weather, and the

want of clothes. The rainy season was now advancing; my whole suit was a shirt, a pair of trowsers, a cotton handkerchief instead of a cap, and a cotton cloth about two yards long, to supply the want of upper garments: and thus accoutred, I have been exposed for twenty, thirty, perhaps near forty hours together, in incessant rains, accompanied with strong gales of wind, without the least shelter, when my master was on shore. I feel to this day some faint returns of the violent pains I then contracted. The excessive cold and wet I endured in that voyage, and so soon after I had recovered from a long sickness, quite broke my constitution and my spirits; the latter were soon restored, but the effects of the former still remain with me, as a needful memento of the service and the wages of sin."

In about two months they returned, and the rest of the time Mr N. spent with his master was chiefly at the Plantanes, and under the same regimen as has been mentioned. His heart was now bowed down, but not at all to a wholesome repentance. While his spirits sunk, the language of the prodigal was far from him: destitute of resolution, and almost all reflection, he had lost the fierceness which fired him when on board the Harwich, and rendered him capable of the most desperate attempts, but he was no farther changed than a tiger tamed by hunger.

However strange it may appear, he attests it as a truth, that though destitute both of food and clothing, and depressed beyond common wretchedness, he could sometimes collect his mind to mathematical studies. Having bought Barrow's Euclid at Plymouth, and it being the only volume he brought on shore, he used to take it to remote corners of the island, and draw his diagrams with a long stick upon the sand. "Thus," says he, "I often beguiled my sorrows, and almost forgot my feelings; and thus without any other assistance, I made myself in a good measure master of the first six books of Euclid."

"With my staff I passed this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." These words of Jacob might well affect Mr N. when remembering the days in which he was busied in planting some lime or lemon trees. The plants he put into the ground were no higher than a young gooseberry bush. His master and mistress, in passing the place, stopped a while to look at him; at length his master said, "Who knows but, by the time these trees grow up and bear, you may go home to England, obtain the command of a ship, and return to reap the fruits of your labours? We see strange things sometimes happen."

"This," says Mr Newton, "as he intended it, was a cutting sarcasm. I believe he thought it full as probable that I should live to be [illegible] of Poland; yet it proved a prediction, and they (one of them at [illegible]) lived to see me return from England, in the capacity he had [illegible]tioned, and pluck some of the first limes from those very trees. [illegible]r can I proceed in my relation, till I raise a monument to the Di[illegible]goodness, by comparing the circumstances in which the Lord has [illegible] placed me with what I was in at that time! Had you seen me, [illegible]hen go so pensive and solitary in the dead of night to wash my [illegible]'irt upon the rocks, and afterwards put it on wet, that it might

dry upon my back, while I slept—had you seen me so poor a figure, that when a ship's boat came to the island, shame often constrained me to hide myself in the woods, from the sight of strangers; especially, had you known that my conduct, principles, and heart, were still darker than my outward condition—how little would you have imagined, that one who so fully answered to the στυγητοι και μισουντες* of the apostle, was reserved to be so peculiar an instance of the providential care and exuberant goodness of God. There was at that time but one earnest desire of my heart, which was not contrary and shocking both to religion and reason; and that one desire, though my vile licentious life rendered me peculiarly unworthy of success, and though a thousand difficulties seemed to render it impossible, the Lord was pleased to gratify."

Things continued thus nearly twelve months. In this interval Mr N. wrote two or three times to his father, describing his condition, and desiring his assistance: at the same time signifying, that he had resolved not to return to England unless his parent were pleased to send for him. His father applied to his friend at Liverpool, who gave orders accordingly to a captain of his, who was then fitting out for Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Some time within the year, Mr N. obtained his master's consent to live with another trader, who dwelt upon the same island. This change was much to his advantage, as he was soon decently clothed, lived in plenty, was treated as a companion, and trusted with his effects to the amount of some thousand pounds. This man had several factories, and white servants in different places; particularly one in Kittam, the river already described as running so near along the sea coast. Mr N. was soon appointed there, and had a share in the management of business, jointly with another servant; they lived as they pleased; business flourished, and their employer was satisfied.

"Here," says he, "I began to be wretch enough to think myself happy. There is a significant phrase frequently used in those parts, that such a white man is grown black. It does not intend an alteration of complexion, but disposition. I have known several, who settling in Africa after the age of thirty or forty, have at that time of life been gradually assimilated to the tempers, customs, and ceremonies of the natives, so far as to prefer that country to England; they have even become dupes to all the pretended charms, necromancies, amulets, and divinations of the blinded Negroes, and put more trust in such things than the wiser sort among the natives. A part of this spirit of infatuation was growing upon me: in time, perhaps, I might have yielded to the whole. I entered into closer engagements with the inhabitants, and should have lived and died a wretch amongst them, if the Lord had not watched over me for good. Not that I had lost those ideas which chiefly engaged my heart to England; but a despair of seeing them accomplished, made me willing to remain where I was. I thought I could more easily bear the disappointment in this situation than near or home. But, as soon as I had fixed my connexions and plans with

* Hateful and hating one another.

these views, the Lord providentially interposed to break them in pieces, and save me from ruin in spite of myself."

In the meantime, the ship that had orders to bring Mr N. home, arrived at Sierra Leone. The captain made inquiry for Mr N. there, and at the Benanoes; but finding he was at a great distance, thought no more about him. A special providence seems to have placed him at Kittam just at this time; for the ship coming no nearer the Benanoes, and staying but a few days, if he had been at the Plantanes, he would not probably have heard of the ship till she had sailed: the same must have certainly been the event had he been sent to any other factory, of which his new master had several. But though the place he went to was a long way up a river, much more than a hundred miles distant from the Plantanes, yet, by its peculiar situation already noticed, he was still within a mile of the sea coast. The interposition was also more remarkable, as at that very juncture he was going in quest of trade, directly from the sea, and would have set out a day or two before, but that they waited for a few articles from the next ship that came, in order to complete the assortment of goods he was to take with him.

They used sometimes to walk to the beach, in hopes of seeing a vessel pass by; but this was very precarious, as at that time the place was not resorted to by ships of trade: many passed in the night, others kept at a considerable distance from the shore, nor does he remember that any one had stopped while he was there.

In Feb. 1747 his fellow-servant, walking down to the beach in the forenoon, saw a vessel sailing by, and made a smoke in token of trade. She was already beyond the place, and the wind being fair, the captain demurred about stopping: had Mr N.'s companion been half an hour later, the vessel would have been beyond recal. When he saw her come to an anchor, he went on board in a canoe, and this proved the very ship already spoken of, which brought an order for Mr N.'s return. One of the first questions the captain put was concerning Mr N.; and understanding he was so near, the captain came on shore to deliver his message.

"Had," says he, "an invitation from home reached me when I was sick and starving at the Plantanes, I should have received it as life from the dead; but now, for the reasons already given, I heard it at first with indifference." The captain, however, unwilling to lose him, framed a story, and gave him a very plausible account of his having missed a large packet of letters and papers, which he should have brought with him; but said he had it from his father's own mouth, as
" as from his employer, that a person lately dead had left Mr N.
hundred pounds per annum; and added, that, if embarrassed in
circumstances, he had express orders to redeem Mr N. though it
ld cost one half of his cargo. Every particular of this was false;
could Mr N. believe what was said about the estate, except that, as
ad some expectations from an aged relation, he thought a part of
ght be true.
it though his father's care and desire to see him was treated so

lightly, and would have been insufficient alone to draw him from his retreat, yet the remembrance of Mrs N., the hopes of seeing her, and the possibility that his accepting this offer might once more put him in the way of gaining her hand, prevailed over all other considerations.

The captain farther promised (and in this he kept his word), that Mr N. should lodge in his cabin, dine at his table, and be his companion, without being liable to service. Thus suddenly was he freed from a captivity of about fifteen months. He had neither a thought nor a desire of this change one hour before it took place; but, embarking with the captain, he in a few hours lost sight of Kittam.

The ship in which he embarked as a passenger, was on a trading voyage for gold, ivory, dyers' wood, and bees' wax. Such a cargo requires more time to collect than one of slaves. The captain began his trade at Gambia, had been already four or five months in Africa, and, during the course of a year after Mr N. had been with him, they ranged the whole coast as far as Cape Lopez, which lies about a degree south of the equinoxial, and more than a thousand miles farther from England than the place from whence he embarked.

"I have," says he, "little to offer worthy of notice, in the course of this tedious voyage. I had no business to employ my thoughts, but sometimes amused myself with mathematics; excepting this, my whole life, when awake, was a course of most horrid impiety and profaneness. I know not that I have ever since met so daring a blasphemer. Not content with common oaths and imprecations, I daily invented new ones; so that I was often seriously reproved by the captain, who was himself a very passionate man, and not at all circumspect in his expressions. From the relation I at times made him of my past adventures, and what he saw of my conduct, and especially towards the close of the voyage, when we met with many disasters, he would often tell me, that, to his great grief, he had a Jonah on board; that a curse attended me wherever I went; and that all the troubles he met with in the voyage were owing to his having taken me into his vessel."

Although Mr N. lived long in the excess of almost every other extravagance, he was never, it seems, fond of drinking: his father was often heard to say, that while his son avoided drunkenness, some hopes might be entertained of his recovery. Sometimes, however, in a frolic, he would promote a drinking bout; not through love of liquor, but disposition to mischief. The last proposal he made of this kind, and at his own expense, was in the river Gabon, whilst the ship was trading on the coast, as follows:—

Four or five of them sat down one evening, to try who could hold out longest in drinking geneva and rum alternately; a large sea-shell supplied the place of a glass. Mr N. was very unfit for such a challenge, as his head was always incapable of bearing much liquor: he began, however, and proposed, as a toast, some imprecation against the person who should start first: this proved to be himself. Fired in his brain, he arose and danced on the deck like a madman; and while he was thus diverting his companions, his hat went overboard. Seeing the ship's boat by moonlight, he endeavoured eagerly to throw himself

over the side into the boat, that he might recover his hat. His sight, however, deceived him, for the boat was not (as he supposed) within his reach, but perhaps twenty feet from the ship's side. He was, however, half overboard, and would in the space of a moment have plunged into the water, when somebody caught hold of his clothes, and pulled him back. This was an amazing escape, as he could not swim, had he been sober; the tide ran very strong, his companions were too much intoxicated to save him, and the rest of the ship's company were asleep.

Another time, at Cape Lopez, before the ship left the coast, he went with some others into the woods, and shot a buffalo, or wild cow: they brought a part of it on board, and carefully marked the place (as he thought) where the rest was left. In the evening they returned to fetch it, but set out too late. Mr N. undertook to be their guide; but night coming on before they could reach the place, they lost their way. Sometimes they were in swamps, and up to their middle in water; and, when they recovered dry land, they could not tell whether they were proceeding towards the ship, or the contrary way. Every step increased their uncertainty—night grew darker—and they were entangled in thick woods, which perhaps the foot of man had never trodden, and which abound with wild beasts; besides which, they had neither light, food, nor arms, while expecting a tiger to rush from behind every tree. The stars were clouded, and they had no compass to form a judgment which way they were going. But it pleased God to secure them from the beasts; and, after some hours perplexity, the moon arose, and pointed out the eastern quarter. It appeared then, that instead of proceeding towards the sea, they had been penetrating into the country: at length, by the guidance of the moon, they recovered the ship.

These, and many other deliverances, produced at that time no salutary effect. The admonitions of conscience, which from successive repulses had grown weaker and weaker, at length entirely ceased; and for the space of many months, if not for some years, he had not a single check of that sort. At times he was visited with sickness, and believed himself to be near death, but had not the least concern about the consequences. "In a word," says he, "I seemed to have every mark of final impenitence and rejection; neither judgments nor mercies made the least impression on me."

At length, their business being finished, they left Cape Lopez, and after a few days stay at the island of Annabona, in order to lay in provisions, they sailed homeward about the beginning of January, 1784. From Annabona to England is perhaps more than seven thousand miles, if the circuits are included, which are necessary to be made on account of the trade winds. They sailed first westward, till near the coast of Brazil, then northward, to the banks of Newfoundland, without meeting any thing extraordinary. On these banks they stopped half a day to fish for cod: this was then chiefly for diversion, as they had provision enough, and little expected those fish (as it afterwards proved), would be all they would have to subsist on. They left the banks, March 1st, with a hard gale of wind westerly, which pushed them fast homewards. By the length of this voyage, in a hot climate, the vessel

was greatly out of repair, and very unfit to endure stormy weather The sails and cordage were likewise very much worn, and many such circumstances concurred to render what followed imminently dangerous.

Among the few books they had on board was Stanhope's Thomas a Kempis. Mr N. carelessly took it up, as he had often done before, to pass away the time, but which he had read with the same indifference as if it were a romance. But, in reading it this time, a thought occurred, "What if these things should be true?" He could not bear the force of the inference, and therefore shut the book, concluding that, true or false, he must abide the consequences of his own choice, and put an end to these reflections by joining in the vain conversation which came in his way.

"But now," says he, "the Lord's time was come, and the conviction I was so unwilling to receive was deeply impressed upon me by an awful dispensation."

He went to bed that night in his usual carnal security, but was awaked from a sound sleep by the force of a violent sea which broke on board: so much of it came down as filled the cabin with water in which he lay. This alarm was followed by a cry from the deck, that the ship was sinking. He essayed to go upon deck, but was met upon the ladder by the captain, who desired him to bring a knife. On his returning for the knife, another person went up in his place who was instantly washed overboard. They had no leisure to lament him, nor expected to survive him long, for the ship was filling with water very fast. The sea had torn away the upper timbers on one side, and made it a mere wreck in a few minutes; so that it seems almost miraculous that any survive to relate the story. They had immediate recourse to the pumps, but the water increased against their efforts. Some of them were set to bailing, though they had but eleven or twelve people to sustain this service: but notwithstanding all they could do, the vessel was nearly full, and with a common cargo must have sunk; but having a great quantity of bees' wax and wood on board, which was specifically lighter than water, and providentially receiving this shock in the very crisis of the gale, towards morning, they were enabled to employ some means for safety, which succeeded beyond hope. In about an hour's time day began to break, and the wind abated: they expended most of their clothes and bedding to stop the leaks; over these they nailed pieces of boards, and at last perceived the water within to subside.

At the beginning of this scene Mr N. was little affected: he pumped hard, and endeavoured to animate himself and his companions. He told one of them, that in a few days this distress would serve for a subject over a glass of wine; but the man being less hardened than himself, replied, with tears, "No; it is too late now." About nine o'clock, being almost spent with cold and labour, Mr N. went to speak with the captain, and, as he was returning, said, almost without meaning, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy upon us!" thus expressing, though with little reflection, his desire of mercy for the first

time within the space of many years. Struck with his own words, it directly occurred to him, "What mercy can there be for me!" He was, however, obliged to return to the pump, and there continued till noon, almost every passing wave breaking over his head, being, like the rest, secured by ropes, that they might not be washed away. He expected, indeed, that every time the vessel descended in the sea, she would rise no more; and though he dreaded death now, and his heart foreboded the worst, if the Scriptures, which he had long opposed, were true, yet he was still but half convinced, and remained for a time in a sullen frame, a mixture of despair and impatience. He thought, if the Christian religion were true, he could not be forgiven, and was therefore expecting, and almost at times wishing, to know the worst of it.

The following part of his Narrative will, I think, be best expressed in his own words:—"The 10th, that is, in the present style, the 21st of March, is a day much to be remembered by me, and I have never suffered it to pass wholly unnoticed since the year 1748. On that day the Lord sent from on high, and delivered me out of deep waters. I continued at the pump from three in the morning till near noon, and then I could do no more. I went and lay down upon my bed, uncertain, and almost indifferent, whether I should rise again. In an hour's time I was called, and, not being able to pump, I went to the helm, and steered the ship till midnight, excepting a small interval for refreshment. I had here leisure and convenient opportunity for reflection. I began to think of my former religious professions—the extraordinary turns of my life—the calls, warnings, and deliverances I had met with—the licentious course of my conversation—particularly by unparalleled effrontery, in making the Gospel history (which I could not be sure was false, though I was not yet assured it was true) the constant subject of profane ridicule. I thought, allowing the Scripture premises, there never was or could be such a sinner as myself; and then comparing the advantages I had broken through, I concluded at first, that my sins were too great to be forgiven. The Scripture likewise seemed to say the same: for I had formerly been well acquainted with the Bible, and many passages upon this occasion returned upon my memory; particularly those awful passages, Prov. i. 24—31; Heb. vi. 4, 6; and 2 Pet. ii. 20; which seemed so exactly to suit my case and character, as to bring with them a presumptive proof of a divine original.

"Thus, as I have said, I have waited with fear and impatience to receive my inevitable doom. Yet though I had thoughts of this kind, they were exceeding faint and disproportionate; it was not till after (perhaps) several years, that I had gained some clear views of the infi- righteousness and grace of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I had a d and strong apprehension of my state by nature and practice; and ps, till then, I could not have borne the sight: so wonderfully the Lord proportion the discoveries of sin and grace; for he knows frame, and that if he were to put forth the greatness of his power, or sinner would be instantly overwhelmed, and crushed as a moth.

But to return: when I saw beyond all probability, that there was hope of respite, and heard about six in the evening that the ship

was freed from water, there arose a gleam of hope. I thought I saw the hand of God displayed in our favour. I began to pray: I could not utter the prayer of faith: I could not draw near to a reconciled God and call him Father: my prayer was like the cry of the ravens, which yet the Lord does not disdain to hear. I now began to think of that Jesus whom I had so often derided: I recollected the particulars of his life and of his death; a death for sins not his own, but, as I remembered, for the sake of those, who, in their distress, should put their trust in him. And now I chiefly wanted evidence. The comfortless principles of infidelity were deeply riveted, and I rather wished than believed these things were real facts. You will please to observe, that I collect the strain of the reasonings and exercises of my mind in one view; but I do not say that all this passed at one time. The great question now was, how to obtain faith? I speak not of an appropriating faith (of which I then knew neither the nature nor necessity), but how I should gain an assurance that the Scriptures were of divine inspiration, and a sufficient warrant for the exercise of trust and hope in God.

"One of the first helps I received (in consequence of a determination to examine the New Testament more carefully) was from Luke xi. 13. I had been sensible, that to profess faith in Jesus Christ, when, in reality, I did not believe his history, was no better than a mockery of the heart-searching God; but here I found a Spirit spoken of, which was to be communicated to those who ask it. Upon this I reasoned thus: If this book be true, the promise in this passage must be true likewise: I have need of that very Spirit, by which the whole was written, in order to understand it aright. He has engaged here to give that Spirit to those who ask: I must therefore pray for it, and if it be of God he will make good his own word. My purposes were strengthened by John vii. 17. I concluded from thence, that though I could not say from my heart, that I believed the Gospel, yet I would, for the present, take it for granted; and that by studying it in this light, I should be more and more confirmed in it.

"If what I am writing could be perused by our modern infidels, they would say (for I too well know their manner), that I was very desirous to persuade myself into this opinion. I confess I was, and so would they be, if the Lord should show them, as he was pleased to show me at that time, the absolute necessity of some expedient to interpose between a righteous God and a sinful soul: upon the Gospel scheme I saw at least a peradventure of hope, but on every other side I was surrounded with black, unfathomable despair."

The wind being now moderate, and the ship drawing nearer to its port, the ship's company began to recover from their consternation, though greatly alarmed by their circumstances. They found, that the water having floated their moveables in the hold, all the casks of provision had been beaten to pieces by the violent motion of the ship. On the other hand, their live stock had been washed overboard, in the storm. In short, all the provisions they saved, except the fish lately caught on the banks for amusement, and a little of the pulse kind

which used to be given to the hogs, would have supported them but a week, and that at a scanty allowance. The sails, too, were mostly blown away, so that they advanced but slowly even while the wind was fair. They imagined they were about a hundred leagues from land, but were in reality much farther. Mr N.'s leisure was chiefly employed in reading, meditation on the Scriptures, and prayer for mercy and instruction.

Things continued thus for about four or five days, when they were awakened one morning by the joyful shouts of the watch upon deck, proclaiming the sight of land, with which they were all soon raised. The dawning was uncommonly beautiful, and the light, just sufficient to discover distant objects, presented what seemed a mountainous coast, about twenty miles off, with two or three small islands; the whole appeared to be the north-west extremity of Ireland, for which they were steering. They sincerely congratulated each other, having no doubt, that, if the wind continued, they should be in safety and plenty the next day. Their brandy, which was reduced to a little more than a pint, was, by the captain's orders, distributed among them; who added, "We shall soon have brandy enough." They likewise ate up the residue of their bread, and were in the condition of men suddenly reprieved from death.

But while their hopes were thus excited, the mate sunk their spirits by saying, in a graver tone, that "he wished it might prove land at last." If one of the common sailors had first said so, the rest would probably have beaten him. The expression, however, brought on warm debates, whether it was land or not; but the case was soon decided, for one of their fancied islands began to grow red from the approach of the sun. In a word, their land was nothing but clouds; and in half an hour more the whole appearance was dissipated.

Still, however, they cherished hope from the wind continuing fair, but of this hope they were soon deprived. That very day, their fair wind subsided into a calm, and the next morning the gale sprung up from the south-east, directly against them, and continued so for more than a fortnight afterwards. At this time the ship was so wrecked, that they were obliged to keep the wind always on the broken side, except when the weather was quite moderate; and were thus driven still farther from their port in the north of Ireland, as far as the Lewis, or western isles of Scotland. Their station now was such as deprived them of any hope of relief from other vessels. "It may indeed be questioned," says Mr N., "whether our ship was not the very first that had been in that part of the ocean, at the same time of the year."

Provisions now began to fall short, the half of a salted cod was a ıy's subsistence for twelve people: they had no stronger liquor than ıter, no bread, hardly any clothes, and very cold weather. They had ıo incessant labour at the pumps, to keep the ship above water. ıch labour and little food wasted them fast, and one man died under : hardship. Yet their sufferings were light when compared with ir fears. Their bare allowance could continue but little longer, and

a dreadful prospect appeared of their being either starved to death, or reduced to feed upon one another.

At this time Mr N. had a farther trouble, peculiar to himself. The captain, whose temper was quite soured by distress, was hourly reproaching him as the sole cause of the calamity, and was confident, that his being thrown overboard would be the only means of preserving them. The captain, indeed, did not intend to make the experiment, but "the continued repetition of this in my ears," says Mr N., "gave me much uneasiness; especially as my conscience seconded his words; I thought it very probable, that all that had befallen us was on my account—that I was at last found out by the powerful hand of God—and condemned in my own breast."

While, however, they were thus proceeding, at the time when they were ready to give up all for lost, and despair appeared in every countenance, they began to conceive hope, from the wind's shifting to the desired point, so as best to suit that broken part of the ship, which must be kept out of the water, and so gently to blow as their few remaining sails could bear. And thus it continued, at an unsettled time of the year, till they were once more called up to see land, and which was really such. They saw the island of Tory, and the next day anchored in Lough Swilly, in Ireland, on the 8th of April, just four weeks after the damage they had sustained from the sea. When they came into this port, their very last victuals were boiling in the pot, and before they had been there two hours, the wind, which seemed to have been providentially restrained till they were in a place of safety, began to blow with great violence; so that, if they had continued at sea that night, they must, in all human estimation, have gone to the bottom! "About this time," says Mr N., "I began to know that there is a God, who hears and answers prayer."

Mr N.'s history is now brought down to the time of his arrival in Ireland, in the year 1748; and the progress he had hitherto made in religion will be best related in his own words. I shall, therefore, make a longer extract than usual, because it is important to trace the operation of real religion in the heart. Speaking of the ship in which he lately sailed, he says, "There were no persons on board to whom I could open myself with freedom, concerning the state of my soul; none from whom I could ask advice. As to books, I had a New Testament, Stanhope, already mentioned, and a volume of Bishop Beveridge's Sermons, one of which, upon our Lord's passion, affected me much. In perusing the New Testament, I was struck with several passages, particularly that of the fig-tree, Luke xiii. the case of St Paul, 1 Tim. i. but particularly that of the prodigal, Luke xv. I thought that had never been so nearly exemplified as by myself. And then the goodness of the father in receiving, nay, in running to meet such a son, and this intended only to illustrate the Lord's goodness to returning sinners! Such reflections gaining upon me, I continued much in prayer; I saw that the Lord had interposed so far to save me, and I hoped he would do more. Outward circumstances helped in this place to make me still more serious and earnest in crying to him, who alone could relieve

me; and sometimes I thought I could be content to die even for want of food, so I might but die a believer.

"Thus far I was answered, that before we arrived in Ireland I had a satisfactory evidence, in my own mind, of the truth of the Gospel, as considered in itself, and of its exact suitableness to answer all my needs. I saw, that, by the way they were pointed out, God might declare, not his mercy only, but his justice also, in the pardon of sin, on account of the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ. My judgment, at that time, embraced the sublime doctrine of 'God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto himself.' I had no idea of those systems, which allow the Saviour no higher honour than that of an upper servant, or at the most a demi-god. I stood in need of an Almighty Saviour, and such a one I found described in the New Testament. Thus far the Lord had wrought a marvellous thing; I was no longer an infidel; I heartily renounced my former profaneness, and had taken up some right notions; was seriously disposed, and sincerely touched with a sense of the undeserved mercy I had received, in being brought safe through so many dangers. I was sorry for my past mispent life, and purposed an immediate reformation. I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been deeply rooted in me, as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man.

"But though I cannot doubt that this change, so far as it prevailed, was wrought by the Spirit and power of God, yet still I was greatly deficient in many respects. I was in some degree affected with a sense of my enormous sins; but I was little aware of the innate evils of my heart. I had no apprehension of the spirituality and extent of the law of God; the hidden life of a Christian, as it consists in communion with God by Jesus Christ; a continual dependence on him for hourly supplies of wisdom, strength, and comfort, was a mystery of which I had as yet no knowledge. I acknowledged the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was past, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. I had no Christian friend or faithful minister to advise me, that my strength was no more than my righteousness; and though I soon began to inquire for serious books, yet, not having spiritual discernment, I frequently made a wrong choice; and I was not brought in the way of evangelical preaching or conversation (except the few times when I heard but understood not) for six years after this period. Those things the Lord was pleased to discover to me gradually. I learnt them here a little, and there a little, by my own painful experience, at a distance from the common means and ordinances, and in the midst of the same course of evil

npany, and bad examples, I had been conversant with for some

e.

"From this period I could no more make a mock at sin, or jest h holy things; I no more questioned the truth of Scripture, or lost ense of the rebukes of conscience. Therefore I consider this as the nning of my return to God, or rather of his return to me; but I ot consider myself to have been a believer (in the full sense of the d) till a considerable time afterwards."

While the ship was refitting at Lough Swilly, Mr N. repaired to Londonderry, where he soon recruited his health and strength. He was now a serious professor, went twice a day to the prayers at church, and determined to receive the sacrament the next opportunity. When the day came, he arose very early, was very earnest in his private devotions, and solemnly engaged himself to the Lord; not with a formal, but sincere surrender, and under a strong sense of the mercies lately received. Having, however, as yet but an imperfect knowledge of his own heart, and of the subtlety of Satan's temptations, he was afterwards seduced to forget the vows of God that were upon him. Yet he felt a peace and satisfaction in the ordinance of that day, to which he had been hitherto an utter stranger.

The next day he went abroad with the mayor of the city, and some gentlemen, shooting; climbing up a steep bank, and pulling his fowling-piece in a perpendicular direction after him, it went off so near his face as to destroy the corner of his hat. The remark he makes on this ought not to be omitted: "Thus, when we think ourselves in the greatest safety, we are no less exposed to danger, than when all the elements seem conspiring to destroy us. The Divine Providence, which is sufficient to deliver us in our utmost extremity, is equally necessary to our preservation in the most peaceful situation."

During their stay in Ireland, Mr N. wrote home. The vessel he was in had not been heard of for eighteen months, and was given up for lost. His father had no expectation of hearing that his son was alive, but received his letter a few days before he embarked from London to become Governor of York Fort, in Hudson's Bay, where he died. He intended to take his son with him, had he returned to England in time. Mr N. received two or three affectionate letters from his father; and hoped, that in three years more he should have had the opportunity of asking his forgiveness, for the uneasiness his disobedience had occasioned; but the ship that was to have brought his father home came without him. It appears he was seized with the cramp, when bathing, and was drowned before the ship arrived in the Bay. Before his father's departure from England, he had paid a visit in Kent, and gave his consent to the union that had been so long talked of.

Mr N. arrived at Liverpool the latter end of May 1748, about the same day that his father sailed from the Nore. He found, however, another father in the gentleman whose ship had brought him home. This friend received him with great tenderness, and the strongest assurances of assistance; yet not stronger than he afterwards fulfilled, for to this instrument of God's goodness he felt he owed every thing. "Yet," as Mr N. justly observes, "it would not have been in the power even of this friend to have served me effectually, if the Lord had not met me on my way home, as I have related. Till then, I was like the man possessed with the legion. No arguments, no persuasion, no views of interest, no remembrance of the past, nor regard to the future, could have restrained me within the bounds of common prudence; but now I was in some measure restored to my senses."

This friend immediately offered Mr N. the command of a ship

which, upon mature consideration, he for the present declined. He prudently considered, that hitherto he had been unsettled and careless; and therefore that he had better make another voyage, and learn obedience and acquire farther experience in business, before he ventured to undertake such a charge. The mate of the vessel in which he came home was preferred to the command of a new ship, and Mr N. engaged to go in the station of mate with him.

There was something so peculiar in Mr N.'s case, after this extraordinary deliverance, and because others in like circumstances might be tempted to despair, that I think it proper to make another extract from his Narrative, as such accounts cannot be well conveyed but in his own words.

"We must not make the experience of others in all respects a rule to ourselves, nor our own a rule to others: yet these are common mistakes, and productive of many more. As to myself, every part of my case has been extraordinary—I have hardly met a single instance resembling it. Few, very few, have been recovered from such a dreadful state; and the few that have been thus favoured, have generally passed through the most severe convictions; and, after the Lord has given them peace, their future lives have been usually more zealous, bright, and exemplary than common. Now, as, on the one hand, my convictions were very moderate, and far below what might have been expected from the dreadful review I had to make; so, on the other, my first beginnings in a religious course were as faint as can be well imagined. I never knew that season alluded to, Jer. ii. 2.; Rev. ii. 4., usually called the time of the first love. Who would not expect to hear, that, after such a wonderful and unhoped-for deliverance as I had received, and after my eyes were in some measure enlightened to see things aright, I should immediately cleave to the Lord and his ways with full purpose of heart, and consult no more with flesh and blood? But, alas! it was far otherwise with me: I had learned to pray: I set some value upon the word of God; and was no longer a libertine; but my soul still 'cleaved to the dust.' Soon after my departure from Liverpool, I began to intermit and grow slack in waiting upon the Lord: I grew vain and trifling in my conversation; and though my heart smote me often, yet my armour was gone, and I declined fast: and by the time we arrived at Guinea, I seemed to have forgotten all the Lord's mercies, and my own engagements, and was (profaneness excepted) almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared a train of temptations, and I became his easy prey; for about a month he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which, a few months before, I could not have supposed myself any longer capable. How much propriety is there in the apostle's advice, 'Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.'"

this voyage Mr N.'s business, while upon the coast, was to sail in the long boat, from place to place, in order to purchase slaves. The ship, at this time, was at Sierra Leone, and he at the Plantanes, the scene of his former captivity, and where every thing he saw tended to remind him of his present ingratitude. He was now in easy circum-

stances, and courted by those who had once despised him. The lime-trees he had formerly planted, were growing tall and promised fruit, upon his expected return with a ship of his own. Unaffected, however, with these things, he needed another providential interposition to rouse him; and accordingly he was visited with a violent fever, which broke the fatal chain, and once more brought him to himself. Alarmed at the prospect before him, he thought himself now summoned away. The dangers and deliverances through which he had passed—his earnest prayers in the time of trouble—his solmn vows before the Lord at his table—and his ungrateful returns for all his goodness—were present at once to his mind. He began then to wish that he had sunk in the ocean, when he first cried for mercy. For a short time he concluded that the door of hope was quite shut. Weak, and almost delirious, he arose from his bed, crept to a retired part of the island, and here found a renewed liberty in prayer: daring to make no more resolves, he cast himself upon the Lord, to do with him as he should please. It does not appear that any thing new was presented to his mind, but that, in general, he was enabled to hope and believe in a crucified Saviour.

After this, the burthen was removed from his conscience, and not only his peace, but his health was gradually restored, when he returned to the ship. And though subject to the efforts and conflicts of sin, dwelling in him, he was ever after delivered from the power and dominion of it.

His leisure hours in this voyage were chiefly employed in acquiring Latin, which he had now almost forgotten. This desire took place from an imitation he had seen of one of Horace's Odes in a Magazine. In this attempt at one of the most difficult of the poets, he had no other help than an old English translation, with Castalio's Latin Bible. He had the edition *in usum Delphini*, and, by comparing the odes with the interpretation, and tracing such words as he understood from place to place by the index, together with what assistance he could get from the Latin Bible, he thus, by dint of hard industry, made some progress. He not only understood the sense of many odes, and some of the epistles, but "I began," says he, "to relish the beauties of the composition; acquired a spice of what Mr Law calls, 'classical ethusiasm;' and, indeed, by this means I had Horace more *ad unguem* than some who are masters of the Latin tongue; for my helps were so few, that I generally had the passage fixed in my memory before I could fully understand its meaning."

During the eight months they were employed upon the coast, Mr N.'s business exposed him to innumerable dangers from burning suns, chilling dews, winds, rains, and thunder storms, in an open boat; and on shore, from long journeys through the woods, and from the natives, who in many places are cruel, treacherous, and watching opportunities for mischief. Several boats, during this time, were cut off, several white men poisoned, and from his own boat he buried six or seven people, with fevers: when going on shore, or returning, he was more than once overset by the violence of the surf, and brought to land half

dead, as he could not swim. Among a number of such escapes, which remained upon his memory, the following will mark the singular providence that was over him:—

On finishing their trade, and being about to sail to the West Indies, the only service Mr N. had to perform in the boat, was to assist in bringing the wood and water from the shore. They were then at Rio Cestors. He used to go into the river, in the afternoon, with the sea-breeze, to procure his lading in the evening, in order to return on board in the morning with the land-wind. Several of these little voyages he had made; but the boat was grown old, and almost unfit for use; this service likewise was almost completed. One day, having dined on board, he was preparing to return to the river as formerly—he had taken leave of the captain—received his orders—was already in the boat—and just going to put off; in that instant the captain came up from the cabin, and called him on board again. Mr N. went, expecting farther orders, but the captain said, "he had taken it into his head" (as he phrased it), that Mr N. should remain that day in the ship, and accordingly ordered another man to go in his room. Mr N. was surprised at this, as the boat had never been sent away without him before. He asked the captain the reason of his resolution, but none was assigned, except as above, that so he would have it. The boat, therefore went without Mr N., but returned no more: it sunk that night in the river; and the person who supplied Mr N.'s place was drowned! Mr N. was much struck when news of the event was received the next morning. The captain himself, though quite a stranger to religion, even to the denying a particular providence, could not help being affected; but declared, that he had no other reason for countermanding Mr N. at that time, but that it came suddenly into his mind to detain him.

A short time after he was thus surprisingly preserved, they sailed for Antigua, and from thence to Charlestown, in South Carolina. In that place there were many serious people; but, at this time, Mr N. was little capable of availing himself of their society, supposing that all who attended public worship were good Christians, and that whatever came from the pulpit must be very good. He had two or three opportunities, indeed, of hearing a minister of eminent character and gifts, whom, though struck with his manner, he did not rightly understand. Almost every day, when business would permit, he used to retire into the woods and fields (being his favourite oratories), and began to taste the delight of communion with God, in the exercises of prayer and praise; and yet so much inconsistency prevailed, that he frequently spent the evening in vain and worthless company. His relish, indeed, for worldly diversions was much weakened; and he was rather a spectator than a sharer in their pleasures; but he did not as yet see the necessity of absolutely relinquishing such society. It appears, that compliances of this sort, in his present circumstances, were owing rather to a want of light than to any obstinate attachment: as he was kept from what he knew to be sinful, he had, for the most part, peace of conscience; and his strongest desires were towards the things of

God. He did not as yet apprehend the force of that precept, "Abstain from all appearance of evil;" but he very often ventured upon the brink of temptation. He did not break with the world at once, as might have been expected, but was gradually led to see the inconvenience and folly of first one thing and then another, and as such to give them up.

They finished their voyage, and arrived in Liverpool. When the ship's affairs were settled, Mr N. went to London, and from thence he soon repaired to Kent. More than seven years had now elapsed since his first visit: no views of the kind seemed more chimerical than his, or could subsist under greater discouragements; yet while he seemed abandoned to his passions, he was still guided, by a hand that he knew not, to the accomplishment of his wishes. Every obstacle was now removed—he had renounced his former follies—his interest was established—and friends on all sides consenting. The point was now entirely between the parties immediately concerned, and, after what had passed, was easily concluded: accordingly their hands were joined, February the 1st, 1750.

"But alas!" says he, "this mercy, which raised me to all I could ask or wish in a temporal view, and which ought to have been an animating motive to obedience and praise, had a contrary effect: I rested in the gift and forgot the giver. My poor narrow heart was satisfied. A cold and careless frame as to spiritual things, took place, and gained ground daily. Happy for me, the season was advancing; and in June I received orders to repair to Liverpool. This roused me from my dream; and I found the pains of absence and separation fully proportioned to my preceding pleasure.* Through all my following voyages, my irregular and excessive affections were as thorns in my eyes, and often made my other blessings tasteless and insipid. But he, who doth all things well, overruled this likewise for good: it became an occasion of quickening me in prayer, both for her and myself; it increased my indifference for company and amusement; it habituated me to a kind of voluntary self-denial, which I was afterwards taught to improve to a better purpose."

Mr N. sailed from Liverpool, in August 1750, commander of a good ship. He had now the command and care of thirty persons: he en-

* In writing to Mrs Newton from St Alban's, he inserts a prayer for his own health and that of Mrs N., upon which he remarks as follows:—

"This prayer includes all that I at that time knew how to ask for; and had not the Lord given me more than I then knew how to ask or think, I should now be completely miserable. The prospect of this separation was terrible to me as death: to avoid it, I repeatedly purchased a ticket in the lottery; thinking, 'Who knows but I may obtain a considerable prize, and be thereby saved from the necessity of going to sea?' Happy for me the lot, which I then considered as casual, was at thy disposal. The money, which I could not with prudence have spared at the time, was lost: all my tickets proved blanks, though I attempted to bribe thee, by promising, if I succeeded, to give a considerable part to the poor. But these blanks were truly prizes. Thy mercy sent me to sea against my own will. To thy blessing, and to my solitary sea-hours, I was indebted for all my temporal comforts and future hopes.

"Thou wert pleased likewise to disappoint me, by thy providence, of some money, which I expected to receive on my marriage; so that, excepting our apparel, when I sailed from Liverpool on my first voyage, the sum total of my worldly inventory was—seventy pounds in debt."

deavoured to treat them with humanity, and to set them a good example.* He likewise established public worship, according to the Liturgy of the Church of England, officiating himself twice every Lord's day. He did not proceed farther than this while he continued in that occupation.

Having now much leisure, he prosecuted the study of Latin with good success. He remembered to take a Dictionary this voyage, and added Juvenal to Horace; and, for prose authors, Livy, Cæsar, and Sallust. He was not aware of the mistake of beginning with such difficult writers; but, having heard Livy highly commended, he was resolved to understand him: he began with the first page, and made it a rule not to proceed to a second till he understood the first. Often at a stand, but seldom discouraged, here and there he found a few lines quite obstinate, and was forced to give them up, especially as his edition had no notes. Before, however, the close of that voyage, he informs us, that he could, with a few exceptions, read Livy, almost as readily as an English author. Other prose authors, he says, cost him but little trouble, as in surmounting the former difficulty he had mastered all in one. In short, in the space of two or three voyages, he became acquainted with the best classics. He read Terence, Virgil, several pieces of Cicero, and the modern classics, Buchanan, Erasmus, and Casimir; and made some essays towards writing elegant Latin.

"But by this time," he observes, "the Lord was pleased to draw me nearer to himself, and to give me a fuller view of the pearl of great price, the inestimable treasure hid in the field of the Holy Scriptures; and for the sake of this I was made willing to part with all my newly-acquired riches. I began to think, that life was too short (especially my life) to admit of leisure for such elaborate trifling. Neither poet nor historian could tell me a word of Jesus; and I therefore applied myself to those who could. The classics were at first restrained to one morning in the week, and at length laid aside."

This his first voyage after his marriage lasted the space of fourteen months, through various scenes of danger and difficulty; but nothing very remarkable occurred; and, after having seen many fall on his right hand and on his left, he was brought home in peace, Nov. 2, 1751.

In the interval, between his first and second voyage, he speaks of the use he found in keeping a sort of diary, of the unfavourable tendency of a life of ease among his friends, and of the satisfaction of his wishes proving unfavourable to the progress of grace; upon the whole, however, he seems to have gained ground, and was led into farther views of Christian doctrine and experience by Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man, Hervey's Meditations, and the Life of Colonel Gardiner. He seems to have derived no advantages from the preach-

* I have heard Mr Newton observe, that, as the commander of a slave-ship, he had a number of women under his absolute command: and knowing the danger of his situation on that account, he resolved to abstain from flesh in his food, and to drink nothing stronger than water during the voyage; that, by abstemiousness, he might subdue every improper emotion: and that, upon his setting sail, the sight of a certain point of land was the signal for his beginning a rule, which he was determined to keep.

ing he heard, or the Christian acquaintance he made; and though he could not live without prayer, he durst not propose it, even to his wife, till she first urged him to the mutual practice of it.

In a few months, the returning season called him abroad again, and he sailed from Liverpool, in a new ship, July 1752*. "I never knew," says he, "sweeter or more frequent hours of Divine communion than in my two last voyages to Guinea, when I was either almost secluded from society on shipboard, or when on shore among the natives. I have wandered through the woods, reflecting on the singular goodness of the Lord to me, in a place where, perhaps there was not a person who knew me for some thousand miles round. Many a time, upon these occasions, I have restored the beautiful lines of Propertius to the right owner; lines full of blasphemy and madness when addressed to a creature, but full of comfort and propriety in the mouth of a believer.

Sic ego desertis possim benè vivere sylvis,
Quò nulla humano sit via trita pede;
Tu mihi curarum requies, in nocte vel artra
Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis.

PARAPHRASED.

In desert woods, with thee, my God,
Where human footsteps never trod,
How happy could I be!
Thou my repose from care, my light
Amidst the darkness of the night,
In solitude my company."

In the course of this voyage, Mr N. was wonderfully preserved through many unforeseen dangers. At one time there was a conspiracy among his own people to become pirates, and take possession of the ship. When the plot was nearly ripe, they watched only for opportunity: two of them were taken ill in one day; one of them died. This suspended the affair, and opened a way to its discovery. The slaves on board frequently plotted insurrections, and were sometimes upon the very brink of one when it was disclosed. When at a place called Mana, near Cape Mount, Mr N. intended to go on shore the next morning to settle some business; but the surf of the sea ran so high, that he was afraid to attempt landing. He had often ventured at a worse time, but then feeling a backwardness which he could not account for, the high surf furnished a pretext for indulging it: he therefore returned to the ship without doing any business. He afterwards found, that, on the day he intended to land, a scandalous and groundless charge had been laid against him, which greatly threatened his honour and interest, both in Africa and England, and would perhaps have affected his life, had he landed. The person most concerned in this affair owed him about a hundred pounds, which he sent in a huff, and otherwise, perhaps, would not have paid it at all. Mr

* Mr N. had had an unexpected call to London; and, on his return, when within a few miles of Liverpool, he mistook a marl pit for a pond, and, in attempting to water his horse, both the horse and the rider plunged into it overhead. He was afterwards told, that, near that time, three persons had lost their lives by a mistake of the same kind.

N. heard no more of this accusation till the next voyage, and then it was publicly acknowledged to have been a malicious calumny, without the least shadow of a ground.

But, as these things did not occur every day, Mr N. prosecuted his Latin, being very regular in the management of his time. He allotted about eight hours for sleep and meals, eight hours for exercise and devotion, and eight hours to his books; and thus, by diversifying his engagements, the whole day was agreeably filled up.

From the coast he went to St. Christopher's, where he met with a great disappointment: for the letters, which he expected from Mrs N:, were by mistake forwarded to Antigua. Certain of her punctuality in writing, if alive, he concluded by not hearing from her, that she was surely dead. This fear deprived him of his appetite and rest, caused an incessant pain in his stomach, and, in the space of three weeks, he was near sinking under the weight of an imaginary stroke. "I felt," says he, "some severe symptoms of that mixture of pride and madness, commonly called a broken heart; and, indeed, I wonder that this case is not more common. How often do the potsherds of the earth presume to contend with their Maker! and what a wonder of mercy is it that they are not all broken! This was a sharp lesson, but I hope it did me good; and when I had thus suffered some weeks, I thought of sending a small vessel to Antigua. I did so, and she brought me several packets, which restored my health and peace, and gave me a strong contrast of the Lord's goodness to me, and of my unbelief and ingratitude towards him."

In August, 1753, Mr N. returned to Liverpool: after that voyage, he continued only six weeks at home, and, in that space, nothing very memorable occurred.

We now follow Mr N. in his third voyage to Guinea: it seems to be the shortest of any that he had made, and which is principally marked by an account of a young man, who had formerly been a midshipman, and his intimate companion on board the Harwich. This youth, at the time Mr N. first knew him, was sober, but afterwards sadly infected with Mr N.'s then libertine principles. They met at Liverpool, and renewed their former acquaintance: as their conversation frequently turned upon religion, Mr N. was very desirous to recover his companion, to whom he gave a plain account of the manner and reasons of his own change, and used every argument to induce him to relinquish his infidelity. When pressed very close, his usual reply was, that Mr N. was the first person who had given him an idea of his liberty, which naturally occasioned many mournful reflections in the mind of his present instructor. This person was going master to Guinea himself; but, meeting with a disappointment, Mr N. offered to take him as a companion, with a view of assisting him in gaining future employment; principally, that his arguments, example, and prayers, might be attended with good effect. But his companion was exceedingly precise; grew worse and worse; and presented a lively, but distressing picture, continually before Mr N.'s eyes, of what he himself had once been. Besides this, the man was not only deaf to remonstrance him-

self, but laboured to counteract Mr N.'s influence upon others: his spirit and passions were likewise so exceedingly high, that it required all Mr N.'s prudence and authority to hold him in any degree of restraint.

At length Mr N. had an opportunity of buying a small vessel, which he supplied with a cargo from his own ship: he gave his companion the command of it; and sent him away to trade on the ship's account. When they parted, Mr N. repeated and enforced his best advice: it seemed greatly to affect his companion at the time; but when he found himself released from the restraint of his instructor, he gave a loose to every appetite; and his violent irregularities, joined to the heat of the climate, soon threw him into a malignant fever, which carried him off in a few days. He seems to have died convinced, but not changed: his rage and despair struck those who were about him with horror; and he pronounced his own fatal doom before he expired, without any sign, that he either hoped or asked for mercy.—I trust the reader will deem the features of this awful case (though a digression from the principal subject) too instructive to be omitted.

Mr N. left the coast in about four months, and sailed for St. Christopher's. Hitherto, he had enjoyed a perfect and equal state of health in different climates for several years. But in this passage he was visited with a fever, which gave him a very near prospect of eternity: he was, however, supported in a silent composure of spirit by the faith of Jesus, and found great relief from those words, "He is able to save to the uttermost." He was for a while troubled, whether by a temptation, or by the fever disordering his faculties, that he should be lost or overlooked amidst the myriads, that are continually entering the unseen world; but the recollection of that Scripture, "the Lord knoweth them that are his," put an end to his doubts. After a few days, however, he began to amend, and by the time they arrived in the West Indies, he was perfectly recovered.

In this way he was led for about the space of six years: he had learnt something of the evil of his heart—had read the Bible over and over—had perused several religious books—and had a general view of Gospel truth: but his conceptions still remained confused in many respects, not having in all this time met with one acquaintance qualified to assist his inquiries.

On his arrival at St. Christopher's he found a captain of a ship from London, a man of experience in the things of God. For near a month, they spent every evening together on board each other's ship alternately: prolonging their visits till near day-break. While Mr N. was an eager recipient, his companion's discourse not only informed his understanding, but inflamed his heart—encouraged him in attempting social prayer—taught him the advantage of Christian converse—put him upon an attempt to make his profession more public, and to venture to speak for God. His conceptions now became more clear and evangelical; he was delivered from a fear, which had long troubled him, of relapsing into his former apostacy; and taught to expect preservation, not from his own power and holiness, but from the power and promise

of God. From this friend he likewise received a general view of the present state of religion, and of the prevailing errors and controversies of the times, and a direction where to inquire in London for farther instruction. Mr N.'s passage homewards gave him leisure to digest what he had received: and he arrived safely at Liverpool, August 1754.*

His stay at home, however, was intended to be but short; and by the beginning of November he was ready again for the sea. But the Lord saw fit to overrule his design. It seems, from the account he gives, that he had not had the least scruple as to the lawfulness of the slave-trade: he regarded it as the appointment of Providence: he considered this employment as respectable and profitable; yet he could not help thinking himself a sort of gaoler, and was sometimes shocked with an employment so conversant with chains, bolts, and shackles. On this account he had often prayed, that he might be fixed in a more humane profession, where he might enjoy more frequent communion with the people and ordinances of God; and be freed from those long domestic separations, which he found so hard to bear. His prayers were now answered, though in an unexpected way.

Mr N. was within two days of sailing, and in apparent good health; but as he was one afternoon drinking tea with Mrs N. he was seized with a fit, which deprived him of sense and motion. When he had recovered from this fit, which lasted about an hour, it left a pain and dizziness in his head, which continued, with such symptoms, as induced the physicians to judge it would not be safe for him to proceed on the voyage. By the advice of a friend, therefore, to whom the ship belonged, he resigned the command on the day before she sailed; and thus he was not only freed from that service, but from the future consequences of a voyage which proved extremely calamitous. The person who went in his room, died; as did most of the officers, and many o. the crew.

As Mr N. was now disengaged from business, he left Liverpool, and spent most of the following year in London, or in Kent. Here he entered upon a new trial, in a disorder that was brought upon Mrs N. from the shock she received in his late illness; as he grew better, she became worse with a disorder, which the physicians could not define,

* In a MS. note on a letter from sea, Mr Newton remarks:—"I now enter my 70th year. Still thou art singularly bountiful to me: still I have reason to think myself favoured, as to externals, beyond the common lot of mortals. Thou didst bear me above the removal of her I most valued, to the admiration of all who knew me. The best part of my childhood and youth was vanity and folly: but, before I attained the age of man, I became exceedingly vile indeed; and was seated in the chair of the scorner in early life. The troubles and miseries I for a time endured were my own. I brought them upon myself, by forsaking thy good and pleasant paths; and choosing the way of transgressors, which I found very hard; they led to slavery, contempt, famine, and despair.

But my recovery from that dreadful state was wholly of thee. Thou didst prepare the means, unsought of and undesired by me. How nice were the turns upon which my delivery from Africa depended! Had the ship passed one quarter of an hour sooner, I had died there a wretch, as I had lived. But thou didst pity and hear my first lispings in prayer, at the time the storm fell upon me. Thou didst preserve me from sinking and starving. Thus I returned home, and thou didst provide friends, when I was destitute and a stranger."

nor medicines remove. Mr N. was therefore placed for about eleven months in what Dr Young calls the

> ——Dreadful post of observation,
> Darker every hour.——

The reader will recollect, that Mr N.'s friend at St. Christopher's had given him information for forming a religious acquaintance in London; in consequence of which, he became intimate with several persons eminent for that character; and profited by the spiritual advantages, which a great city affords with respect to means. When he was in Kent, his advantages were of a different kind; most of his time he passed in the fields and woods. "It has been my custom," says he, "for many years, to perform my devotional exercises *sub dio* when I have opportunity, and I always find these scenes have some tendency both to refresh and compose my spirits. A beautiful, diversified prospect gladdens my heart. When I am withdrawn from the noise and petty works of men, I consider myself as in the great temple, which the Lord has built for his own honour."

During this time he had to weather two trials, the principal of which was Mrs N.'s illness. She still grew worse, and he had daily more reason to fear that hour of separation, which appeared to be at hand. He had likewise to provide some future settlement; the African trade was overdone that year, and his friends did not care to fit out another ship till that which had been his returned. Though a provision of food and raiment had seldom been with him a cause of great solicitude, yet he was some time in suspense on this account; but, in August following, he received a letter, that he was nominated to a post, which afforded him a competency, both unsought and unexpected.

When he had gained this point, his distress respecting Mrs N. was doubled; he was obliged to leave her in the greatest extremity of pain and illness; and when he had no hope that he should see her again alive. He was, however, enabled to resign her and himself to the divine disposal; and, soon after he was gone, she began to amend, and recovered so fast, that in about two months he had the pleasure to meet her at Stone, on her journey to Liverpool.

From October 1755, he appears to have been comfortably settled at Liverpool, and mentions his having received, since the year 1757, much profit from his acquaintance in the West Riding of Yorkshire. "I have conversed," says he, "at large, among all parties, without joining any and in my attempts to hit the golden mean, I have been sometimes drawn too near the different extremes; yet the Lord has enabled me to profit by my mistakes." Being at length placed in a settled habitation, and finding his business would afford him much leisure, he considered in what manner he could improve it. Having determined, with the apostle "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," he devoted his life to the prosecution of spiritual knowledge, and resolved to pursue nothing but in subservience to this design. But as what follows will appear most natural, and must be better expressed in

his own words, I shall transcribe them from the conclusion of his Narrative.

"This resolution," says Mr N., "divorced me (as I have already hinted) from the classics and mathematics. My first attempt was to learn so much Greek as would enable me to understand the New Testament and Septuagint; and when I had made some progress this way, I entered upon the Hebrew the following year; and two years afterwards, having surmised some advantages from the Syriac version, I began with that language. You must not think that I have attained, or even aimed at a critical skill in any of these; I had no business with them, but as in reference to something else. I never read one classic author in the Greek; I thought it too late in life to take such a round in this language as I had done in the Latin. I only wanted the signification of scriptural words and phrases, and for this I thought I might avail myself of Scapula, the Synopsis, and others, who had sustained the drudgery before me. In the Hebrew, I can read the historical books and Psalms with tolerable ease; but in the prophetical and difficult parts, I am frequently obliged to have recourse to Lexicons, &c. However, I know so much as to be able, with such helps as are at hand, to judge for myself the meaning of any passage I have occasion to consult.

"Together with these studies, I have kept up a course of reading the best writers in Divinity, that have come to my hand, in the Latin and English tongues, and some French, for I picked up the French at times while I used the sea. But within these two or three years, I have accustomed myself chiefly to writing, and have not found time to read many books besides the Scriptures.

"I am the more particular in this account, as my case has been something singular; for in all my literary attempts I have been obliged to strike out my own path by the light I could acquire from books, as I have not had a teacher or assistant since I was ten years of age.

"One word concerning my views to the ministry, and I have done. I have told you, that this was my dear mother's hope concerning me; but her death, and the scenes of life in which I afterwards engaged, seemed to cut off the probability. The first desires of this sort in my own mind, arose many years ago, from reflection on Gal. i. 23, 24. I could but wish for such a public opportunity to testify the riches of Divine grace. I thought I was, above most living, a fit person to proclaim that faithful saying, 'that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners;' and as my life had been full of remarkable turns, and I seemed selected to show what the Lord could do, I was i some hopes, that perhaps, sooner or later, he might call me into his s vice.

'I believe it was a distant hope of this that determined me to study t : original Scriptures; but it remained an imperfect desire in my (n breast, till it was recommended to me by some Christian friends.] tarted at the thought when first seriously proposed to me: but, af- 1 wards, set apart some weeks to consider the case, to consult my l nds, and to entreat the Lord's direction. The judgment of my

friends, and many things that occurred, tended to engage me. My first thought was to join the Dissenters, from a presumption that I could not honestly make the required subscriptions; but Mr C——, in a conversation upon these points, moderated my scruples; and, preferring the Established Church in some respects, I accepted a title from him some months afterwards; and solicited ordination from the late Archbishop of York. I need not tell you I met a refusal, nor what steps I took afterwards to succeed elsewhere. At present I desist from my applications. My desire to serve the Lord is not weakened; but I am not so hasty to push myself forward as I was formerly. It is sufficient that he knows how to dispose of me, and that he both can and will do what is best. To him I commend myself: I trust that his will and my true interest are inseparable. To his name be glory for ever: and with this I conclude my story."

A variety of remarks occurred to me while abridging the Narrative, but I refrained from putting them down, lest, by interrupting its course, and breaking the thread of the history, I should rather disgust than profit the reader. I have heard Mr N. relate a few additional particulars, but they were of too little interest to be inserted here; they went, however, like natural incidents, to a farther authentication of the above account, had it needed any other confirmation than the solemn declaration of the pious relator. Romantic relations, indeed, of unprincipled travellers, which appear to have no better basis than a disposition to amuse credulity, to exhibit vanity, or to acquire gain, may naturally raise suspicion, and produce but a momentary effect at most on the mind of the reader; but facts, like the present, manifest such a display of the power, providence, and grace of God; and at the same time such a deep and humbling view of human depravity, when moved and brought forth by circumstances, as inexperience can scarcely credit, but which must interest the eye of pious contemplation, and open a new world of wonders.

I must now attempt to conduct the reader without the help of Mr N.'s Narrative, finished Feb. 2, 1763; to which, as I have already observed, he referred me for the former and most singular part of his life. When I left the above account with him for revision, he expressed full satisfaction as to all the facts related; but said, he thought I had been too minute even in the abridgment, since the Narrative itself had been long before the public. I remarked, in reply, that the Narrative contained a great variety of facts—that these Memoirs might fall into the hands of persons who had not seen the Narrative—but that, without some abridgment of it, no clear view could be formed of the peculiarity of his whole dispensation and character—and, therefore, that such an abridgment appeared to be absolutely necessary, and that he had recommended it at my first undertaking the work. With these reasons he was well satisfied. I now proceed to the remaining, though less remarkable, part of his life.

Mr Manesty, who had long been a faithful and generous friend of Mr N. having procured him the place of tide-surveyor in the port of Liverpool, Mr N. gives the following account of it:—"I entered upon

business yesterday. I find my duty is to attend the tides one week, and visit the ships that arrive, and such as are in the river; and the other week to inspect the vessels that are in the docks; and thus alternately the year round. The latter is little more than a sinecure, but the former requires pretty constant attendance, both by day and night. I have a good office, with fire and candle, and fifty or sixty people under my direction; with a handsome six-oared boat and a coxswain to row me about in form." *

We cannot wonder that Mr N. latterly retained a strong impression of a particular providence, superintending and conducting the steps of man; since he was so often reminded of it in his own history. The following occurrence is one of many instances. Mr N. after his reformation, was remarkable for his punctuality: I remember his often sitting with his watch in his hand lest he should fail in keeping his next engagement. This exactness with respect to time, it seems, was his habit while occupying his post at Liverpool. One day, however, some business had so detained him, that he came to his boat much later than usual, to the surprise of those who had observed his former punctuality. He went out in the boat as heretofore, to inspect a ship, but the ship blew up just before he reached her: it appears, that if he had left the shore a few minutes sooner, he must have perished with the rest on board.

This anecdote I had from a clergyman, upon whose word I can depend, who had been long in intimate habits with Mr N., and who had it from Mr N. himself: the reason of its not appearing in his letters from Liverpool to Mrs N. I can only suppose to be, his fearing to alarm her with respect to the dangers of his station. But another providential occurrence, which he mentions in those letters, I shall transcribe.

"When I think of my settlement here, and the manner of it, I see the appointment of Providence so good and gracious, and such a plain answer to my poor prayers, that I cannot but wonder and adore. I I think I have not yet told you, that my immediate predecessor in office, Mr C—, had not the least intention of resigning his place on the occasion of his father's death; though such a report was spread about the town without his knowledge, or rather in defiance of all he could say to contradict it. Yet to this false report I owe my situation. For it put Mr M— upon an application to Mr S—, the member for the town; and, the very day he received the promise in my favour, Mr C— was found dead in his bed, though he had been in company, and in perfect health, the night before. If I mistake not, the same messenger who brought the promise, carried back the news of the vacancy to Mr S—, at Chester. About an hour after, the mayor applied for a nephew of his; but, though it was only an hour or two, he was too late. Mr S— had already written, and sent off the letter; and I was appointed accordingly. These circumstances appear to me extraordinary, though of a piece with many other parts of my singular history.

* Letters to a Wife, vol. ii. p. 7

And the more so, as by another mistake I missed the land-waiter's place, which was my first object, and which I now see would not have suited us nearly so well. I thank God I can now look through instruments, and second causes, and see his wisdom and goodness immediately concerned, in fixing my lot."

Mr N. having expressed, near the end of his Narrative, the motives which induced him to aim at a regular appointment to the ministry in the church of England, and of the refusal he met with in his first making the attempt, the reader is father informed, that, on Dec. 16, 1758, Mr N. received a title to a curacy from the Rev. Mr C—, and applied to the archbishop of York, Dr Gilbert, for ordination. The bishop of Chester having countersigned his testimonials, directed him to Dr Newton, the archbishop's chaplain. He was referred to the secretary, and received the softest refusal imaginable. The secretary informed him, that he had "represented the matter to the archbishop, but his Grace was inflexible in supporting the rules and canons of the church," &c.

Travelling to Loughborough, Mr N. stopped at Welwyn, and sending a note to the celebrated Dr Young, he received for answer, that the doctor would be glad to see him. He found the doctor's conversation agreeable, and to answer his expectation respecting the author of the Night Thoughts. The doctor likewise seemed pleased with Mr N. He approved Mr N.'s design of entering the ministry, and said many encouraging things upon the subject: and when he dismissed Mr N. desired him never to pass near Welwyn without calling upon him.

Mr N. it seems, had made some small attempts at Liverpool, in a way of preaching or expounding. Many wished him to engage more at large in those ministerial employments, to which his own mind was inclined; and he thus expresses his motives in a letter to Mrs N. in answer to the objections she had formed. "The late death of Mr Jones, of St Saviour's, has pressed this concern more closely upon my mind. I fear it must be wrong, after having so solemnly devoted myself to the Lord for his service, to wear away my time, and bury my talents in silence (because I have been refused orders in the church) after all the great things he has done for me."*

In a note annexed, he observes, that "the influence of his judicious and affectionate counsellor moderated the zeal which dictated this letter, written in the year 1762, that had it not been for her, he should probably have been precluded from those important scenes of service, to which he was afterwards appointed;" but he adds, "The exercises of my mind upon this point, I believe, have not been peculiar to myself. I have known several persons, sensible, pious, of competent abilities, and cordially attached to the established church; who, being wearied out with repeated refusals of ordination, and perhaps, not having the advantage of such an adviser as I had, have at length struck into the itinerant path, or settled among the Dissenters. Some of these, yet living, are men of respectable characters, and useful in their

* Letters to a Wife, vol. ii. p. 79.

ministry; but their influence, which would once have been serviceable to the true interests of the Church of England, now rather operates against it."

In the year 1764, Mr N. had the curacy of Olney proposed to him, and was recommended by Lord D— to Dr Green, bishop of Lincoln; of whose candour and tenderness he speaks with much respect. The bishop had admitted him as a candidate for orders. "The examination," says he, "lasted about an hour, chiefly upon the principal heads of Divinity. As I resolved not to be charged hereafter with dissimulation, I was constrained to differ from his lordship in some points: but he was not offended; he declared himself satisfied, and has promised to ordain me, either next Sunday, in town, or the Sunday following, at Buckden. Let us praise the Lord!"*

Mr N. was ordained deacon at Buckden, April 29, 1764, and priest in June the following year. In the parish of Olney, he found many, who not only had evangelical views of the truth, but had also long walked in the light and experience of it. The vicarage was in the gift of the Earl of D—, the nobleman to whom Mr N. addressed the first twenty-six letters in his Cardiphonia. The earl was a man of real piety, and most amiable disposition; he had formerly appointed the Rev. Moses Brown vicar. Mr Brown was an evangelical minister, and a good man; of course he had afforded wholesome instruction to the parishioners of Olney, and had been the instrument of a sound conversion in many of them. He was the author of a poetical piece entitled Sunday Thoughts, a translation of Professor Zimmerman's Excellency of the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, &c.

But Mr Brown had a numerous family, and met with considerable trials in it; he too much resembled Eli in his indulgence of his children. He was also under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, and had therefore accepted the chaplaincy of Morden College, Blackheath, while vicar of Olney. Mr N. in these circumstances, undertook the curacy of Olney, in which he continued near sixteen years, previous to his removal to St Mary Woolnoth, to which he was afterwards presented, by the late John Thornton, Esq.

As Mr N. was under the greatest obligations to Mr Thornton's friendship while at Olney, and had been enabled to extend his own usefulness by the bounty of that extraordinary man, it may not be foreign to our subject to give some general outline of Mr Thornton's character in this place.

It is said of Solomon, that "the Lord gave him largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea-shore:" such a peculiar disposition for atever was good or benevolent was also bestowed on Mr Thornton. differed as much from rich men of ordinary bounty, as they do from ers that are parsimonious. Nor was this bounty the result of occanal impulse, like a summer shower, violent and short; on the conry, it proceeded like a river pouring its waters through various counes, copious and inexhaustible. Nor could those obstructions of im-

* Letters to a Wife, vol. ii. p. 89.

posture and ingratitude, which have often been advanced as the cause of damming up other streams, prevent or retard the course of this. The generosity of Mr Thornton, indeed, frequently met with such hinderances, and led him to increasing discrimination, but the stream of his bounty never ceased to hold its course. Deep, silent, and overwhelming, it still rolled on, nor ended even with his life.

But the fountain from whence this beneficence flowed, and by which its permanency and direction were maintained, must not be concealed. Mr Thornton was a Christian. Let no one, however, so mistake me here, as to suppose, that I mean nothing more by the term Christian, than the state of one, who, convinced of the truth of revelation, gives assent to its doctrines—regularly attends its ordinances—and maintains an external moral and religious deportment. Such a one may have a name to live while he is dead; he may have a form of godliness without the power of it; he may even be found denying and ridiculing that power—till at length he can only be convinced of his error at an infallible tribunal; where a widow, that gives but a mite, or a publican, that smites on his breast, shall be preferred before him.

Mr Thornton was a Christian indeed; that is, he was alive to God by a spiritual regeneration. With this God he was daily and earnestly transacting that infinitely momentous affair—the salvation of his own soul; and, next to that, the salvation of the souls of others. Temperate in all things, though mean in nothing, he made provision for doing good with his opulence, and seemed to be most in his element when appropriating a considerable part of his large income to the necessities of others.

But Mr Thornton possessed that discrimination in his attempts to serve his fellow-creatures, which distinguishes an enlightened mind: he habitually contemplated man, as one, who has not only a body, subject to want, affliction, and death, but also a spirit, which is immortal, and must be happy or miserable for ever. He therefore felt, that the noblest exertions of charity are those which are directed to the relief of the noblest part of our species. Accordingly, he left no mode of exertion untried to relieve man under his natural ignorance and depravity. To this end, he purchased advowsons and presentations, with a view to place in parishes the most enlightened, active and useful ministers. He employed the extensive commerce in which he was engaged, as a powerful instrument for conveying immense quantities of Bibles, prayer-books, and the most useful publications, to every place visited by our trade. He printed, at his own sole expense, large editions of the latter for that purpose; and it may safely be affirmed, that there is scarcely a part of the known world, where such books could be introduced, which did not feel the salutary influence of this single individual.

Nor was Mr Thornton limited in his views of promoting the interests of real religion, with what sect soever it was connected. He stood ready to assist a beneficial design in every party, but would be the creature of none. General good was his object, and wherever or however it made its way, his maxim seemed constantly to be, "*valeat quantum, valere potest*"

But the nature and extent of his liberality will be greatly misconceived, if any one should suppose it confined to moral and religious objects, though the grandest and most comprehensive exertions of it. Mr Thornton was a philanthropist on the largest scale—the friend of man under all his wants. His manner of relieving his fellow-men was princely; instances might be mentioned of it, were it proper to particularize, which would surprise those who did not know Mr Thornton. They were so much out of ordinary course and expectation, that I know some, who felt it their duty to inquire of him, whether the sum they had received was sent by his intention, or by mistake? To this may be added, that the manner of presenting his gifts was as delicate and concealed, as the measure was large.

Besides this constant course of private donations, there was scarcely a public charity, or occasion of relief to the ignorant or necessitous, which did not meet with his distinguished support. His only question was, "May the miseries of man, in any measure, be removed or alleviated?" Nor was he merely distinguished by stretching out a liberal hand: his benevolent heart was so intent on doing good, that he was ever inventing and promoting plans for its diffusion at home or abroad.

He that wisely desires any end, will as wisely regard the means; in this Mr Thornton was perfectly consistent. In order to execute his beneficent designs, he observed frugality and exactness in his personal expenses. By such prospective methods, he was able to extend the influence of his fortune far beyond those, who, in still more elevated stations, are slaves to expensive habits. Such men meanly pace in trammels of the tyrant *custom*, till it leaves them scarcely enough to preserve their conscience, or even their credit, much less to employ their talents in Mr Thornton's nobler pursuits. He, however, could afford to be generous; and, while he was generous, did not forget his duty in being just. He made ample provision for his children; and though, while they are living, it would be indelicate to say more, I am sure of speaking truth when I say, they are so far from thinking themselves impoverished by the bounty of their father, that they contemplate with the highest satisfaction the fruit of those benefits to society, which he planted, which it may be trusted will extend with time itself, and which, after his example, they still labour to extend.

But, with all the piety and liberality of his honoured character, no man had deeper views of his own unworthiness before his God. To the Redeemer's work alone he looked for acceptance of his person and services: he felt, that all he did, or could do, was infinitely short of that which had been done for him, and of the obligations that were thereby laid upon him. It was this abasedness of heart towards God, combining with the most singular largeness of heart toward his fellow-creatures, which distinguished John Thornton among men.

To this common patron of every useful and pious endeavour, Mr N. sent the Narrative, from which the former part of these Memoirs is extracted. Mr Thornton replied in his usual manner, that is, by accompanying his letter with a valuable bank note; and, some months later, he paid Mr N. a visit at Olney. A closer connexion being now

formed between friends, who employed their distinct talents in promoting the same benevolent cause, Mr Thornton left a sum of money with Mr N. to be appropriated to the defraying his necessary expenses, and relieving the poor. "Be hospitable," said Mr Thornton, "and keep an open house for such as are worthy of an entertainment: help the poor and needy: I will statedly allow you L.200 a-year, and readily send whatever you have occasion to draw for more." Mr N. told me, that he thought he had received of Mr Thornton upwards of L.3000 in this way, during the time he resided at Olney.

The case of most ministers is peculiar in this respect: some among them may be looked up to, on account of their publicity and talents; they may have made great sacrifices of their personal interest, in order to enter on their ministry, and may be possessed of the strongest benevolence; but, from the narrowness of their pecuniary circumstances, and from the largeness of their families, they often perceive, that an ordinary tradesman in their parishes, can subscribe to a charitable or popular institution much more liberally than themselves. This would have been Mr N.'s case, but for the above-mentioned singular patronage.

A minister, however, should not be so forgetful of his dispensation, as to repine at his want of power in this respect. He might as justly estimate his deficiency by the strength of the lion, or the flight of the eagle. The power communicated to him is of another kind; and power of every kind belongs to God, who gives gifts to every man severally as he will. The two mites of the widow were all the power of that kind which was communicated to her, and her bestowment of her two mites was better accepted than the large offerings of the rich man. The powers, therefore, of Mr Thornton, and of Mr N., though of a different order, were both consecrated to God; and each might have said, "Of thine own have we given thee."

Providence seems to have appointed Mr N.'s residence at Olney, among other reasons, for the relief of the depressed mind of the poet Cowper. There has gone forth an unfounded report, that the deplorable melancholy of Cowper was, in part, derived from his residence and connexions in that place. The fact, however, is the reverse of this; and as it may be of importance to the interests of true religion to prevent such a misrepresentation from taking root, I will present the real state of the case, as I have found it attested by the most respectable living witnesses; and more especially as confirmed by a MS., written by the poet himself, at the calmest period of his life; with the perusal of which I was favoured by Mr N.

It most evidently appears, that symptoms of Mr Cowper's morbid state began to discover themselves in his earliest youth. He seems to have been at all times disordered, in a greater or less degree. He was sent to Westminster school at the age of nine years, and long endured the tyranny of an elder boy, of which he gives a shocking account in the paper above-mentioned; and which "produced," as one of his biographers observes, who had long intimacy with him, "an indelible effect upon his mind through life." A person so naturally bashful and

depressed as Cowper, must needs find the profession of a barrister a farther occasion of anxiety: the post obtained for him by his friends in the House of Lords, overwhelmed him; and the remonstrances which those friends made against his relinquishing so honourable and lucrative an appointment (but which soon after actually took place), greatly increased the anguish of a mind already incapacitated for business. To all this were added events, which of themselves have been found sufficient to overset the minds of the strongest; namely the decease of his particular friend and intimate, Sir William Russel; and his meeting with a disappointment in obtaining a lady, upon whom his affections were placed.

But the state of a person, torn and depressed, not by his religious connexions, but by adverse circumstances, and these meeting a naturally morbid sensibility, long before he knew Olney, or had formed any connexion with its inhabitants, will best appear from some verses which he sent at this time to one of his female relations, and for the communication of which we are indebted to Mr Hayley :—

" Doom'd, as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past;
Depriv'd of every joy I valued most—
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost:
Call not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humour or of spleen;
Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,
Him—snatch'd by fate, in early youth, away;
And her, through tedious years of doubt and pain,
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain.
See me, ere yet my destin'd course half done,
Cast forth a wand'rer on a wild unknown!
See me, neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost!
Nor ask, why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,
And ready tears wait only leave to flow:
Why all that soothes a heart, from anguish free,
All that delights the happy—palls with me?

That any man, under such pressures, should at first turn his mind to those resources, which religion alone can afford, is both natural and rational. But Mr Cowper was like a person looking from a high tower, who perceives only the danger of falling, but neither the security nor prospect it presents; and therefore it is no wonder, with so melancholy, morbid, and susceptible a mind, that his unhappiness should be increased. And yet this very mind of Cowper, when put under the care of Dr Cotton, of St Alban's (a physician as capable of administering to the spiritual as to the natural maladies of his patients), ceived the first consolation it ever tasted, and that from evangelical uths. It was under the care of this physician, that Mr Cowper first tained a clear view of those sublime and animating truths, which so stinguished and exalted his future strains as a poet. Here also he ceived that settled tranquillity and peace, which he enjoyed for seve-l years afterwards. So far, therefore, was his constitutional malady om being produced or increased by his evangelical connexions, either St Alban's or at Olney, that he seems never to have had any settled

peace but from the truths he learned in these societies. It appears, that among them alone he found the only sunshine he ever enjoyed, through the cloudy day of his afflicted life.

It appears also, that, while at Dr Cotton's, Mr Cowper's distress was, for a long time entirely removed, by marking that passage in Rom. iii. 25: "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." In this scripture he saw the remedy, which God provides for the relief of a guilty conscience, with such clearness, that, for several years after, his heart was filled with love, and his life occupied with prayer, praise, and doing good to his needy fellow-creatures.

Mr N. told me, that from Mr Cowper's first coming to Olney, it was observed he had studied his Bible with such advantage, and was so well acquainted with its design, that not only his troubles were removed, but that to the end of his life he never had clearer views of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel than when he first became an attendant upon them; that (short intervals excepted) Mr Cowper enjoyed a course of peace for several successive years; that, during this period, the inseparable attendants of a lively faith appeared, by Mr Cowper's exerting himself to the utmost of his power in every benevolent service he could render to his poor neighbours: and that Mr N. used to consider him as a sort of curate, from his constant attendance upon the sick and afflicted, in that large and necessitous parish.

But the malady, which seemed to be subdued by the strong consolations of the gospel, was still latent; and only required some occasion of irritation to break out again, and overwhelm the patient. Any object of constant attention, that shall occupy a mind previously disordered, whether fear, or love, or science, or religion, will not be so much the cause of the disease, as the accidental occasion of exciting it. Cowper's Letters will show us how much his mind was occupied at one time by the truths of the Bible, and at another time by the fictions of Homer; but his melancholy was originally a constitutional disease, a physical disorder, which, indeed, could be affected either by the Bible or by Homer, but was utterly distinct in its nature from the mere matter of either. And here I cannot but mark this necessary distinction, having often been witness to cases where religion has been assigned as the proper cause of insanity, when it has been only an accidental occasion, in the case of one already affected.* Thus Cowper's malady, like

* I have been an eye-witness of several instances of this kind of misrepresentation, but will detain the reader with mentioning only one I was called to visit a woman whose mind was disordered, and on my observing, that it was a case which required the assistance of a physician rather than that of a clergyman, her husband replied: "Sir, we sent to you, because it is a religious case —her mind has been injured by constantly reading the Bible." "I have known many instances," said I, "of persons brought to their senses by reading the Bible; but it is possible, that too intense an application to that, as well as to any other subject, may have disordered your wife." "There is every proof of it," said he; and was proceeding to multiply his proofs, till his brother interrupted him by thus addressing me:—

"Sir, I have no longer patience to stand by and see you imposed on. The truth of the matter is this: my brother has forsaken his wife, and been long connected with a loose woman. He had the best of wives in her, and one who was strongly attached to him: but she has seen his heart and property given to another, and in her solitude and distress, went to the Bible, as the only consolation left her. Her health and spirits at length sunk under her troubles; and there she lies, dis-

a strong current, breaking down the banks which had hitherto sustained the pressure and obliquity of its course, prevailed against the supports he had received, and precipitated him again into his former distress.

I inquired of Mr N. as to the manner in which Mr Cowper's disorder returned, after an apparent recovery of nearly nine years continuance: and was informed, that the first symptoms were discovered one morning, in his discourse, soon after he had undertaken a new engagement in composition.

As a general and full account of this extraordinary genius is already before the public, such particulars would not have occupied so much room in these Memoirs, but with the view of removing the false statements that have been made.

Of great importance also was the vicinity of Mr N.'s residence to that of the Rev. Mr Scott, then curate of Ravenstone and Weston Underwood, and now rector of Aston Sandford; a man whose ministry and writings have since been so useful to mankind. This clergyman was nearly a Socinian: he was in the habit of ridiculing evangelical religion, and laboured to bring over Mr N. to his own sentiments. Mr Scott had married a lady from the family of a Mr Wright, a gentleman in his parish, who had promised to provide for him. But Mr Scott's objections to subscription arose so high, that he informed his patron it would be in vain to attempt providing for him in the Church of England, as he could not conscientiously accept a living, on the condition of subscribing its Liturgy and Articles. "This," said Mr N., "gave me hopes of Mr Scott's being sincere, however wrong in his principles."

But the benefit which Mr Scott derived from his neighbour, will best appear in his own words:—*

"I was," says he, "full of proud self-sufficiency, very positive, and very obstinate; and being situated in the neighbourhood of some of those whom the world calls Methodists, I joined in the prevailing sentiment; held them in sovereign contempt; spoke of them with derision; declaimed against them from the pulpit, as persons full of bigotry, enthusiasm, and spiritual pride; laid heavy things to their charge; and endeavoured to prove the doctrine, which I supposed them to hold (for I had never read their books), to be dishonourable to God, and destructive of morality; and though in some companies I chose to conceal part of my sentiments, and in all affected to speak as a friend to universal toleration, yet scarcely any person could be more proudly and violently prejudiced against both their persons and principles than I then was.

'In January 1774, two of my parishioners, a man and his wife, lay
' the point of death. I had heard of the circumstance, but, according
' my general custom, not being sent for, I took no notice of it; till one
' ning, the woman being now dead, and the man dying, I heard that

' ed, not from reading her Bible, but from the infidelity and cruelty of her husband." Does the
' er wish to know what reply the husband made to this? He made no reply at all, but left the
' with confusion of face.

Scott's Force of Truth, p. 11, fifth edition

my neighbour Mr N. had been several times to visit them. Immediately my conscience reproached me with being shamefully negligent, in sitting at home within a few doors of dying persons, my general hearers, and never going to visit them. Directly it occurred to me, that whatever contempt I might have for Mr N.'s doctrines, I must acknowledge his practice to be more consistent with the ministerial character than my own. He must have more zeal and love for souls than I had, or he would not have walked so far to visit and supply my lack of care to those, who, as far as I was concerned, might have been left to perish in their sins.

"This reflection affected me so much, that without delay, and very earnestly, yea, with tears, I besought the Lord to forgive my past neglect; and I resolved thenceforth to be more attentive to this duty: which resolution, though at first formed in ignorant dependence on my own strength, I have by divine grace been enabled hitherto to keep. I went immediately to visit the survivor; and the affecting sight of one person already dead, and another expiring in the same chamber, served more deeply to impress my serious convictions.

"It was at this time that my correspondence with Mr N. commenced. At a visitation, May 1775, we exchanged a few words on a controverted subject, in the room among the clergy, which I believe drew many eyes upon us. At that time he prudently declined the discourse; but a day or two after he sent me a short note, with a little book for my perusal. This was the very thing I wanted; and I gladly embraced the opportunity, which, according to my wishes, seemed now to offer; God knoweth, with no inconsiderable expectations, that my arguments would prove irresistibly convincing, and that I should have the honour of rescuing a well-meaning person from his enthusiastical delusions.

"I had, indeed, by this time conceived a very favourable opinion of him, and a sort of respect for him, being acquainted with the character he sustained even among some persons, who expressed a disapprobation of his doctrines. They were forward to commend him as a benevolent, disinterested, inoffensive person, and a laborious minister. But, on the other hand, I looked upon his religious sentiments as rank fanaticism; and entertained a very contemptible opinion of his abilities, natural and acquired. Once I had had the curiosity to hear him preach; and, not understanding his sermon, I made a very great jest of it, where I could do it without giving offence. I had also read one of his publications; but for the same reason I thought the greater part of it whimsical, paradoxical, and unintelligible.

"Concealing, therefore, the true motives of my conduct, under the offer of friendship, and a professed desire to know the truth (which, amidst all my self-sufficiency and prejudice, I trust the Lord had even then given me), with the greatest affectation of candour, and of a mind open to conviction, I wrote him a long letter; purposing to draw from him such an avowal and explanation of his sentiments, as might introduce a controversial discussion of our religious differences.

"The event by no means answered my expectation. He returned a very friendly and long answer to my letter, in which he carefully

avoided the mention of those doctrines which he knew would offend me. He declared, that he believed me to be one who feared God, and was under the teaching of his Holy Spirit; that he gladly accepted my offer of friendship, and was no ways inclined to dictate to me; but that, leaving me to the guidance of the Lord, he would be glad, as occasion served, from time to time, to bear testimony to the truths of the gospel, and to communicate his sentiments to me on any subject with all the confidence of friendship.

"In this manner our correspondence began; and it was continued, in the interchange of nine or ten letters, till December in the same year. Throughout I held my purpose, and he his. I made use of every endeavour to draw him into controversy, and filled my letters with definitions, inquiries, arguments, objections, and consequences, requiring explicit answers. He, on the other hand, shunned every thing controversial as much as possible, and filled his letters with the most useful and least offensive instructions; except that now and then he dropped his hints concerning the necessity, the true nature, and the efficacy of faith, and the manner in which it was to be sought and obtained, and concerning some other matters, suited, as he judged, to help me forward in my inquiry after truth. But they much offended my prejudices, afforded me matter of disputation, and at that time were of little use to me.

"When I had made this little progress in seeking the truth, my acquaintance with Mr N. was resumed. From the conclusion of our correspondence in December 1775, till April 1777, it had been almost wholly dropped. To speak plainly, I did not care for his company: I did not mean to make any use of him as an instructor, and I was unwilling the world should think us in any way connected. But, under discouraging circumstances, I had occasion to call upon him; and his discourse so comforted and edified me, that my heart, being by his means relieved from its burden, became susceptible of affection for him. From that time I was inwardly pleased to have him for my friend; though not, as now, rejoiced to call him so. I had, however, even at that time no thoughts of learning doctrinal truth from him, and was ashamed to be detected in his company; but I sometimes stole away to spend an hour with him. About the same period I once heard him preach; but still it was foolishness to me, his sermon being principally upon the believer's experience, in some particulars with which I was unacquainted; so that, though I loved and valued him, I considered him as a person misled by enthusiastical notions, and strenuously insisted, that we should never think alike till we met in heaven."

Mr Scott, after going on to particularize his progress in the discovery of truth, and the character of Mr N. as its minister, afterwards adds:—

"The pride of reasoning, and the conceit of superior discernment, all along accompanied me; and though somewhat broken, had yet considerable influence. Hitherto, therefore, I had not thought of hearing any person preach; because I did not think any one in the circle of my acquaintance capable of giving me such information as I wanted

But being at length convinced, that Mr N. had been right, and that I had been mistaken, in the several particulars in which we had differed, it occurred to me, that, having preached those doctrines so long, he must understand many things concerning them to which I was a stranger. Now, therefore, though not without much remaining prejudice, and not less in the character of a judge than of a scholar, I condescended to be his hearer, and occasionally to attend his preaching, and that of some other ministers. I soon perceived the benefit; for from time to time the secrets of my heart were discovered to me, far beyond what I had hitherto noticed; and I seldom returned from hearing a sermon without having conceived a meaner opinion of myself—without having attained to a farther acquaintance with my deficiencies, weaknesses, corruptions, and wants—or without being supplied with fresh matter for prayer, and directed to greater watchfulness. I likewise learned the use of experience in preaching; and was convinced that the readiest way to reach the hearts and consciences of others was to speak from my own. In short, I gradually saw more and more my need of instruction, and was at length brought to consider myself as a very novice in religious matters. Thus I began experimentally to perceive our Lord's meaning, when he says, 'Except ye receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, ye shall in nowise enter therein.'"

If I have seemed to digress in dwelling so long on these three characters, let the reader consider the importance of the facts—their intimate connexion with Mr N.'s history—and let me inform him, that the author has something much nearer his heart than that of precision in setting forth the history of an individual; namely, that of exhibiting the nature and importance of vital and experimental religion: he therefore gladly brings forward any fact found in his way, which may tend to illustrate it.

But to return to the more immediate subject of these Memoirs. In the year 1776, Mr N. was afflicted with a tumour, or wen, which had formed on his thigh; and on account of its growing more large and troublesome, he resolved to undergo the experiment of extirpation. This obliged him to go to London for the operation, which was successfully performed, October 10th, by the late Mr Warner, of Guy's Hospital. I remember hearing him speak several years afterwards of this trying occasion; but the trial did not seem to have affected him as a painful operation, so much as a critical opportunity in which he might fail in demonstrating the patience of a Christian under pain. "I felt," said he, "that being enabled to bear a very sharp operation, with tolerable calmness and confidence, was a greater favour granted to me than the deliverance from my malady.*

* His reflections upon the occasion, in his diary, are as follow:—"Thou didst support me, and make this operation very tolerable. The cure, by thy blessing, was happily expedited: so that, on Sunday the 27th, I was enabled to go to church and hear Mr F———, and the Sunday following, to preach for him. The tenderness and attention of Dr and Mrs F———, with whom we were, I cannot sufficiently describe; nor, indeed, the kindness of many other friends. To them I would be thankful, my Lord, but especially to thee; for what are creatures but instruments in thy hand, fulfilling thy pleasure? At home all was preserved quiet, and I met with no incident to distress or disturb me while absent. The last fortnight I preached often, and was hurried about in seeing my

While Mr N. thus continued faithfully discharging the duties of his station, and watching for the temporal and eternal welfare of his flock, a dreadful fire broke out at Olney, October 1777. Mr N. took an active part in comforting and relieving the sufferers: he collected upwards of L.200 for them; a considerable sum of money, when the poverty and late calamity of the place are regarded. Such instances of benevolence towards the people, with the constant assistance he afforded the poor, by the help of Mr Thornton, naturally led him to expect that he should have so much influence as to restrain gross licentiousness on particular occasions. But, to use his own expression, he had "lived to bury the old crop on which any dependence could be placed." He preached a weekly lecture, which occurred that year on the 5th of November; and, as he feared that the usual way of celebrating it at Olney might endanger his hearers in their attendance at the church, he exerted himself to preserve some degree of quiet on that evening. Instead, however, of hearkening to his entreaties, the looser sort exceeded their former extravagance, drunkenness, and rioting, and even obliged him to send out money, to preserve his house from violence. This happened but a year before he finally left Olney. When he related this occurrence to me, he added, that he believed he should never have left the place while he lived, had not so incorrigible a spirit prevailed in a parish he had long laboured to reform.

But I must remark here, that this is no solitary fact, nor at all unaccountable. The gospel, we are informed, is not merely "a savour of life unto life," but also "of death unto death." Those whom it does not soften it is often found to harden. Thus we find St Paul "went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them."

"The strong man armed," seeks to keep his "house and goods in peace," and, if a minister is disposed to let this sleep of death remain, that minister's own house and goods may be permitted to remain in peace also. Such a minister may be esteemed by his parish as a good kind of man—quiet, inoffensive, candid, &c.; and if he discover any zeal, it is directed to keep the parish in the state he found it; that is, in ignorance and unbelief, worldly-minded and hard-hearted—the very state of peace in which the strong man armed seeks to keep his palace or citadel, the human heart.

But if a minister, like the subject of these Memoirs, enters into the design of his commission—if he be alive to the interest of his own soul, d that of the souls committed to his charge; or, as the apostle exesses it, "to save himself and those that hear him," he may depend on meeting in his own experience the truth of that declaration, Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," one form of it or another. One of the most melancholy sights we

da. But though I had a little leisure or opportunity for retirement, and my heart, alas! as l, sadly reluctant and dull in secret, yet in public thou wert pleased to favour me with li- y."

behold is when any part of the church, through prejudice, joins the world in throwing the stone. There is, however such a determined enmity to godliness itself, in the breast of a certain class of men existing in most parishes, that whatever learning and good sense are found in their teacher—whatever consistency of character, or blameless deportment he exhibits—whatever benevolence or bounty (like that which Mr N. exercised at Olney) may constantly appear in his character—such men remain irreconcilable. They will resist every attempt made to appease their enmity. God alone, who changed the hearts of Paul and of Newton, can heal these bitter waters.

I recollect to have heard Mr N. say on such an occasion, "When God is about to perform any great work, he generally permits some great opposition to it. Suppose Pharaoh had acquiesced in the departure of the children of Israel, or that they had met with no difficulties in the way, they would, indeed, have passed from Egypt to Canaan with ease; but they, as well as the church in all future ages, would have been great losers. The wonder-working God would not have been seen in those extremities, which make his arm so visible. A smooth passage, here, would have made but a poor story."

But, under such disorders, Mr N., in no one instance that I ever heard of, was tempted to depart from the line marked out by the precept and example of his Master. He continued to "bless them that persecuted him," knowing that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." To the last day he spent among them, he went straight forward, "in meekness instructing those that opposed, if God peradventure might give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth."

But, before we take a final leave of Olney, the reader must be informed of another part of Mr N.'s labours. He had published a volume of Sermons before he took orders, dated Liverpool, January 1, 1760. In 1762 he published his Omicron, to which his letters, signed Vigil, were afterwards annexed. In 1764 appeared his Narrative. In 1767, a volume of Sermons, preached at Olney. In 1769 his Review of Ecclesiastical History: and in 1779, a volume of Hymns, of which some were composed by Mr Cowper, and distinguished by a C. To these succeeded, in 1781, his valuable work, Cardiphonia; but more will be said of these in their place.

From Olney Mr N. was removed to the rectory of the united parishes of St Mary Woolnoth, and St Mary Woolchurch Haw, Lombard Street, on the presentation of his friend Mr Thornton.

It is remarkable, that these parishes had been favoured with two very eminent pastors, before Mr N. appeared; namely, the Rev. Josias Shute, B.D., archdeacon of Colchester, and rector of St Mary Woolnoth who died 1643—and the Rev. Ralph Robinson, who died in 1655. There is a well written account of Mr Shute in the Christian Observer of January 1804; from which it appears, that his piety, ministerial talents, and moderation in those difficult times, were very much distinguished during the thirty-three years he continued rec-

tor.* Mr Robinson died young, but has left a volume of truly evangelical discourses preached at St Mary's.

Some difficulty arose on Mr N.'s being presented, by Mr Thornton's right of presentation being claimed by a nobleman; the question was, therefore, at length brought before the House of Lords, and determined in favour of Mr Thornton. Mr N. preached his first sermon in these parishes, Dec. 19, 1779, from Eph. iv. 15. "Speaking the truth in love." It contained an affectionate address to his parishioners, and was directly published for their use.

Here a new and very distinct scene of action and usefulness was set before him. Placed in the centre of London—in an opulent neighbourhood—with connexions daily increasing, he had now a course of service to pursue, in several respects different from his former at Olney. Being, however, well acquainted with the word of God, and the heart of man, he proposed to himself no new weapons of warfare, for pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan around him. He perceived, indeed, most of his parishioners too intent upon their wealth and merchandise to pay much regard to their new minister; but, since they would not come to him, he was determined to go, as far as he could, to them; and, therefore, soon after his institution, he sent a printed address to his parishioners: he afterwards sent them another address, on the usual prejudices that are taken up against the gospel. What effects these attempts had then upon them does not appear; certain it is, that these, and other acts of his ministry, will be recollected by them, when the objects of their present pursuits are forgotten or lamented.

I have heard Mr N. speak with great feeling on the circumstances of his last important station. "That one," said he, "of the most ignorant, the most miserable, and the most abandoned of slaves, should be plucked from his forlorn state of exile on the coast of Africa, and at length be appointed minister of the parish of the first magistrate of the first city in the world—that he should there not only testify of such grace, but stand up as a singular instance and monument of it—that he should be enabled to record it in his history, preaching, and writings to the world at large—is a fact I can contemplate with admiration, but never sufficiently estimate." This reflection, indeed, was so present to his mind on all occasions, and in all places, that he seldom passed a single day anywhere, but he was found referring to the strange event, in one way or other.

It may be necessary to add, that the latter part of these Memoirs leads me to speak so personally of my friend, that any farther inspection from his own eye was deemed improper.

When Mr N. came to St Mary's, he resided for some time in Charles'

* Granger, in his Biographical History of England, says, that "His learning in divinity and ecclesiastical history was extensive, indeed almost universal." And even Walker, in his Account of the Clergy, says, that, "In the beginning of the troubles, he was molested and harassed to death, and denied a funeral sermon to be preached for him by Dr Holdsworth, as he desired—that he was a person of great piety, charity, and gravity, and of a most sweet and affable temper." It farther appears, that, like his successor Mr N., he preached twice on the Sunday, and had a lecture in his church every Wednesday.

Square, Hoxton; afterwards he removed to Coleman Street Buildings, where he continued till his death. Being of the most friendly and communicative disposition, his house was open to Christians of all ranks and denominations. Here, like a father among his children, he used to entertain, encourage, and instruct his friends, especially younger ministers, or candidates for the ministry. Here also the poor, the afflicted, and the tempted, found an asylum and a sympathy, which they could scarcely find, in an equal degree, anywhere besides.

His timely hints were often given with much point, and profitable address, to the numerous acquaintance which surrounded him in this public station. Some time after Mr N. had published his Omicron, and described the three stages of growth in religion, from the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, distinguishing them by the letters A, B, and C, a conceited young minister wrote to Mr N., telling him, that he read his own character accurately drawn in that of C. Mr N. wrote in reply, that in drawing the character of C, or full maturity, he had forgotten to add, till now, one prominent feature of C's character, namely, that C never knew his own face.

"It grieves me," said Mr N., "to see so few of my wealthy parishioners come to church. I always consider the rich as under greater obligations to the preaching of the gospel than the poor. For at church, the rich must hear the whole truth as well as others. There they have no mode of escape. But let them once get home, you will be troubled to get at them; and, when you are admitted, you are so fettered with punctilio, so interrupted and damped with the frivolous conversation of their friends, that, as Archbishop Leighton says, 'it is well if your visit does not prove a blank or a blot.'"

Mr N. used to improve every occurrence which he could with propriety bring into the pulpit. One night he found a bill put up at St Mary Woolnoth's, upon which he commented a great deal when he came to preach. The bill was to this effect: "A young man, having come to the possession of a very considerable fortune, desires the prayers of the congregation, that he may be preserved from the snares to which it exposes him."—"Now, if the man," said Mr N., "had lost a fortune, the world would not have wondered to have seen him put up a bill; but this man has been better taught."

Coming out of his church, on a Wednesday, a lady stopped him on the steps, and said, "The ticket, of which I held a quarter, is drawn a prize of ten thousand pounds: I know you will congratulate me upon the occasion." "Madam," said he, "as for a friend under temptation, I will endeavour to pray for you."

Soon after he came to St Mary's, I remember to have heard him say, in a certain company, "Some have observed, that I preach shorter sermons on a Sunday morning, and with more caution: but this I do upon principle. I suppose I may have two or three of my bankers present, and some others of my parish, who have hitherto been strangers to my views of truth. I endeavour to imitate the apostle. 'I became,' says he, 'all things to all men;' but observe the end, it was in order to gain some. The fowler must go cautiously to meet shy birds, but

he will not leave his powder and shot behind him. 'I have fed you with milk,' says the apostle; but there are some, that are not only for forcing strong meat, but bones too, down the throat of the child.—We must have patience with a single step in the case of an infant; and there are one-step books and sermons, which are good in their place. Christ taught his diciples as they were able to bear; and it was upon the same principle that the apostle accommodated himself to prejudice. —Now," continued he, "what I wish to remark on these considerations is, that this apostolical principle, steadily pursued, will render a minister apparently inconsistent—superficial hearers will think him a trimmer. On the other hand, a minister, destitute of the apostolical principle and intention, and directing his whole force to preserve the appearance of consistency, may thus seem to preserve it; but, let me tell you, here is only the form of faithfulness, without the spirit."

I could not help observing one day, how much Mr N. was grieved with the mistake of a minister, who appeared to pay too much attention to politics. "For my part," said he, "I have no temptation to turn politician, and much less to inflame a party, in these times. When a ship is leaky, and a mutinous spirit divides the company on board, a wise man would say, 'My good friends, while we are debating, the water is gaining on us—we had better leave the debate, and go to the pumps.'—I endeavour," continued he, "to turn my people's eyes from instruments to God. I am continually attempting to show them, how far they are from knowing either the matter of fact, or the matter of right. I inculcate our great privileges in this country, and advise a discontented man to take a lodging for a little while in Russia or Prussia."

Though no great variety of anecdote is to be expected in a course so stationary as this part of Mr N.'s life and ministry; for sometimes the course of a single day might give the account of a whole year; yet the day was so benevolently spent, that he was found in it "not only rejoicing with those that rejoiced," but literally "weeping with those that wept." The portrait which Goldsmith drew from imagination, Mr N. realized in fact, insomuch that had Mr N. sat for his picture to the poet, it could not have been more accurately delineated than by the following lines in his Deserted Village:—

"Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.
Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he prayed and felt, for all:
And as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way."

I remember to have heard him say, when speaking of his continual interruptions, "I see in this world two heaps of human happiness and misery; now if I can take but the smallest bit from one heap and add

to the other, I carry a point.—If, as I go home, a child has dropped a halfpenny, and if, by giving it another, I can wipe away its tears, I feel I have done something. I should be glad indeed to do greater things, but I will not neglect this. When I hear a knock at my study door, I hear a message from God; it may be a lesson of instruction, perhaps a lesson of patience; but, since it is his message, it must be interesting."

But it was not merely under his own roof that his benevolent aims were thus exerted; he was found ready to take an active part in relieving the miserable, directing the anxious, or recovering the wanderer, in whatever state or place he discovered such: of which, take the following instance:—

Mr———, who is still living, and who holds a post of great importance abroad, was a youth of considerable talents, and who had had a respectable education. I am not informed of his original destination in point of profession; but certain it is, that he left his parents in Scotland, with a design of viewing the world at large, and that without those pecuniary resources, which could render such an undertaking convenient, or even practicable. Yet having the sanguine expectations of youth, together with its inexperience, he determinately pursued his plan. I have seen an account from his own hand, of the strange, but by no means dishonourable resources to which he was reduced in the pursuit of this scheme; nor can romance exceed the detail. But the particulars of his long journey, till he arrived in London, and those which have since occurred, would not be proper, at present, for any one to record except himself; and I cannot but wish he would favour the world with them, on the principle which led Mr N. to write his Narrative. To London, however, he came; and then he seemed to come to himself. He had heard Mr N.'s character, and on a Sunday evening he came to St Mary Woolnoth, and stood in one of the aisles while Mr N. preached. In the course of that week he wrote Mr N. some account of his adventure, and state of mind. Such circumstances could be addressed to no man more properly. Mr N.'s favourite maxim was often in his mouth, more often in his actions, and always in his heart:

"Haud ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco."

Mr N. therefore gave notice from the pulpit on the following Sunday evening, that, if the person was present who had sent him such a letter, he would be glad to speak with him.

Mr ——— gladly accepted the invitation, and came to Mr N.'s house, where a friendship began, which continued till Mr N.'s death. Mr N. not only afforded this youth the instruction, which he, at this period, so deeply needed; but marking his fine abilities and corrected inclination, he introduced him to Henry Thornton, Esq.; who, inheriting his father's unbounded liberality and determined adherence to the cause of real religion, readily patronized the stranger. Mr ——— was, by the munificence of this gentleman, supported through a university education, and was afterwards ordained to the curacy of ———. It was, however,

thought expedient, that his talents should be employed in an important station abroad, which he readily undertook, and in which he now maintains a very distinguished character.

It ought not to be concealed, that Mr ——, since his advancement, has not only returned his patron the whole expense of his university education, but has also placed in his hands an equal sum, for the education of some pious youth, who might be deemed worthy of that assistance once afforded to himself!

Mr N. used to spend a month or two, annually, at the house of some friend in the country; he always took an affectionate leave of his congregation before he departed, and spake of his leaving town as quite uncertain of returning to it, considering the variety of incidents which might prevent that return. Nothing was more remarkable than his constant habit of regarding the hand of God in every event, however trivial it might appear to others. On every occasion—in the concerns of every hour—in matters public or private, like Enoch, he "walked with God." Take a single instance of his state of mind in this respect. In walking to his church he would say, "'The way of man is not in himself,' nor can he conceive what belongs to a single step. When I go to St Mary Woolnoth, it seems the same whether I turn down Lothbury or go through the Old Jewry; but the going through one street and not another, may produce an effect of lasting consequences. A man cut down my hammock in sport, but had he cut it down half-an-hour later, I had not been here; as the exchange of crew was then making. A man made a smoke on the sea-shore at the time a ship passed, which was thereby brought to, and afterwards brought me to England."

Mr N. had experienced a severe stroke soon after he came to St Mary's, and while he resided in Charles' Square, in the death of his niece, Miss Eliza Cunningham. He loved her with the affection of a parent, and she was, indeed, truly lovely. He had brought her up, and had observed, that, with the most amiable natural qualities, she possessed a real piety. With every possible attention from Mr and Mrs Newton and their friends, they saw her gradually sink into the arms of death; but fully prepared to meet him as a messenger sent from a yet kinder Father, to whom she departed, October 6th, 1785, aged fourteen years and eight months. On this occasion Mr N. published some brief memoirs of her character and death.

In the year 1784 and 1785 Mr N. preached a course of sermons, on an occasion, of which he gives the following account in his first discourse: "Conversation in almost every company, for some time past, s much turned upon the commemoration of Handel, and particularon his Oratorio of the Messiah. I mean to lead your meditations to language of the oratorio, and to consider, in their order (if the d, on whom our breath depends, shall be pleased to afford life, abi-, and opportunity), the several sublime and interesting passages of ipture, which are the basis of that admired composition." In the ar 1786 he published these discourses, in two volumes octavo. There s passage so original, at the beginning of his fourth sermon, from

Mal. iii. 1–3, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple," &c. that I shall transcribe it for the use of such as have not seen these discourses; at the same time, it will, in a few words, convey Mr N.'s idea of the usual performance of this oratorio, or attending its performance, in present circumstances.

"'Whereunto shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like?' I represent to myself a number of persons, of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources, they call in the assistance of music. And amidst a great variety of subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their Judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed, the groundwork of a musical entertainment. And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The king, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them, that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music: and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them, if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion; accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments. Surely, if such a case as I have supposed could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility!"

But "clouds return after the rain:" a greater loss than that of Miss C. was to follow. Enough has been said in these Memoirs already, to show the more than ordinary affection Mr N. felt for her who had been so long his idol, as he used to call her; of which I shall add but one more instance, out of many that might easily be collected.

Being with him at the house of a lady at Blackheath, we stood at a window, which had a prospect of Shooter's Hill. "Ah," said Mr N., "I remember the many journeys I took from London to stand at the

top of that hill, in order to look towards the part in which Mrs N. then lived: not that I could see the spot itself, after travelling several miles, for she lived far beyond what I could see, when on the hill; but it gratified me even to look towards the spot: and this I did always once, and sometimes twice a week." "Why," said I, "this is more like one of the vagaries of romance than of real life." "True," replied he, "but real life has extravagancies, that would not be admitted to appear in a well-written romance—they would be said to be out of nature."

In such a continued habit of excessive attachment, it is evident how keenly Mr N. must have felt, while he observed the progress of a threatening induration in her breast. This tumour seemed to have arisen from a blow she received before she left Liverpool. The pain it occasioned at the time soon wore off, but a small lump remained in the part affected. In October 1788, on the tumour's increasing, she applied to an eminent surgeon, who told her it was a cancer, and now too large for extraction, and that he could only recommend quiet. As the spring of 1789 advanced, her malady increased; and though she was able to bear a journey to Southampton, from which she returned, in other respects, tolerably well; she grew gradually worse with the cancer, till she expired, December 15, 1790.

Mr N. made this remark on her death, "Just before Mrs N.'s disease became so formidable, I was preaching on the waters of Egypt being turned into blood. The Egyptians had idolized their river, and God made them loathe it. I was apprehensive it would soon be a similar case with me." During the very affecting season of Mrs N.'s dissolution, Mr N., like David, wept and prayed; but the desire of his eyes being taken away by the stroke, he too, like David, "arose from the earth, and came into the temple of the Lord, and worshipped," and that in a manner which surprised some of his friends.

I must own I was not one of those who saw any thing that might not be expected from such a man, surrounded with such circumstances. I did not wonder at his undertaking to preach Mrs N.'s funeral Sermon, on the following Sunday, at St Mary's: since I always considered him as an original, and his case quite an exception to general habits in many respects. There also could be no question as to the affection he had borne to the deceased: it had even prevailed, as he readily allowed, to an eccentric and blameable degree; and indeed after her removal, he used to observe an annual seclusion, for a special recollection of her, whom through the year he had never forgotten, and from which proceeded a sort of little elegies or sonnets to her memory. But he clearly recognized the will of God in the removal of his idol, and reasoned as David did on the occasion: "While she was yet alive I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that she may live? But, now she is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring her back again? I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

Besides which, Mr N. had a favourite sentiment, which I have heard him express in different ways, long before he had so special an occasion for illustrating it in practice. "God in his providence," he used to

say, "is continually bringing about occasions to demonstrate characters." He used to instance the case of Achan and Judas among bad men; and that of St Paul, Acts xxvii. among good ones. "If any one," said he, "had asked the centurion, who Paul the prisoner was, that sailed with them on board the ship—it is probable he would have thus replied, 'He is a troublesome enthusiast, who had lately joined himself to a certain sect. These people affirm, that a Jewish malefactor, who was crucified some years ago at Jerusalem, rose the third day from the dead; and this Paul is mad enough to assert, that Jesus, the leader of their sect, is not only now alive, but that he himself has seen him, and is resolved to live and die for him—Poor crazy creature!' But God made use of this occasion to discover the real character of Paul, and taught the centurion, from the circumstances which followed, to whom it was he owed his direction in the storm, and for whose sake he received his preservation through it."

In all trying occasions, therefore, Mr N. was particularly impressed with the idea of a Christian, and especially of a Christian minister, being called to stand forward as an example to his flock—to feel himself placed in a post of honour—a post in which he may not only glorify God, but also forcibly demonstrate the peculiar supports of the gospel. More especially, when this could be done (as in his own case) from no doubtful motive; then it may be expedient to leave the path of ordinary custom, for the greater reason of exhibiting both the doctrines of truth, and the experience of their power.

Though I professedly publish none of Mr N.'s letters, for reasons hereafter assigned, yet I shall take the liberty to insert part of one, with which I am favoured by J. F——, Esq. of Stanmore Hill, written to him while at Rome, and dated December 5th, 1796. It shows the interest which the writer took in the safety of his friend, and his address in attempting to break the enchantments with which men of taste are surrounded, when standing in the centre of the fine arts.

"The true Christian, in strict propriety of speech, has no home here; he is, and must be, a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth: his citizenship, treasure, and real home are in a better world; and every step he takes, whether to the east, or to the west, is a step nearer to his Father's house. On the other hand, when in the path of duty, he is always at home; for the whole earth is the Lord's: and as we see the same sun in England or Italy, in Europe or Asia, so wherever he is, he equally sets the Lord always before him; and finds himself equally near the throne of grace at all times, and in all places. God is everywhere, and, by faith in the great Mediator, he dwells in God, and God in him; to him that line of Horace may be applied in the best sense,

"Cœlum, non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt."

"I trust, my dear Sir, that you will carry out and bring home with you, a determination similar to that of the patriarch Jacob; who vowed a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on.

so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God!' May the Lord himself write it on your heart!

"You are now at Rome, the centre of the fine arts; a place abounding with every thing to gratify a person of your taste. Athens had the pre-eminence in the apostle Paul's time; and I think it highly probable, from many passages in his writings, that he likewise had a taste capable of admiring and relishing the beauties of painting, sculpture, and architecture, which he could not but observe during his abode in that city: but then he had a higher, a spiritual, a divine taste, which was greatly shocked and grieved by the ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness, which surrounded him, insomuch that he could attend to nothing else. This taste, which cannot be acquired by any effort or study of ours, but is freely bestowed on all who sincerely ask it of the Lord, divests the vanities, which the world admire, of their glare; and enables us to judge of the most splendid and specious works of men, who know not God, according to the declaration of the prophet, 'They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web.' Much ingenuity is displayed in the weaving of a cobweb, but when finished it is worthless and useless: incubation requires close diligence and attention; if the hen is too long from her nest, the egg is spoiled; but why should she sit at all upon the egg, and watch it, and warm it night and day, if it only produce a cockatrice at last? Thus vanity or mischief are the chief rulers of unsanctified genius; the artists spin webs, and the philosophers, by their learned speculations, hatch cockatrices, to poison themselves and their fellow-creatures: few of either sort have one serious thought of that awful eternity, upon the brink of which they stand for a while, and into the depth of which they successively fall.

"A part of the sentence denounced against the city, which once stood upon seven hills, is so pointed and graphical, that I must transcribe it: 'And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee, and the light of a candle shall no more be seen in thee.' Now, I am informed, that, upon certain occasions, the whole cupola of St Peter's is covered with lamps, and affords a very magnificent spectacle: if I saw it, it would remind me of that time when there will not be the shining of a single candle in the city; for the sentence must be executed, and the hour may be approaching:—

Sic transit gloria mundi!

"You kindly inquire after my health: myself and family are, th ugh the divine favour, perfectly well; yet, healthy as I am, I la o r under a growing disorder, for which there is no cure—I mean ol age. I am not sorry it is a mortal disease, from which no one re c rs; for who would live always in such a world as this, who has a s ptural hope of an inheritance in the world of light? I am now in my s enty-second year, and seem to have lived long enough for myself; I ve known something of the evil of life, and have had a large share o he good. I know what the world can do, and what it cannot do;

it can neither give nor take away that peace of God, which passeth all understanding; it cannot soothe a wounded conscience, nor enable us to meet death with comfort. That you, my dear sir, may have an abiding and abounding experience that the gospel is a catholicon, adapted to all our wants and all our feelings, and a suitable help when every other help fails, is the sincere and ardent prayer of

"Your affectionate friend,
"JOHN NEWTON."

But in proportion as Mr N. felt the vanity of the pursuits he endeavoured to expose in the foregoing letter, he was as feelingly alive to whatever regarded eternal concerns. Take an instance of this, in a visit which he paid to another friend. This friend was a minister, who affected great accuracy in his discourses, and who, on that Sunday, had nearly occupied an hour in insisting on several laboured and nice distinctions made in his subject. As he had a high estimation of Mr N.'s judgment, he inquired of him, as they walked home, whether he thought the distinctions just now insisted on were full and judicious? Mr N. said he thought them not full, as a very important one had been omitted. "What can that be?" said the minister, "for I had taken more than ordinary care to enumerate them fully." "I think not," replied Mr N.; "for when many of your congregation had travelled several miles for a meal, I think you should not have forgotten the important distinction which must ever exist between meat and bones."

In the year 1790, Mr N. had the honorary degree of D.D. conferred upon him by the University of New Jersey in America, and the diploma sent him. He also received a work in two volumes, dedicated to him with the above title annexed to his name. Mr N. wrote the author a grateful acknowledgment for the work, but begged to decline an honour which he never intended to accept. "I am (said he) as one born out of due time. I have neither the pretension nor wish to honours of this kind. However, therefore, the University may over-rate my attainments, and thus show their respect, I must not forget myself: It would he both vain and improper were I to concur in it."

But Mr N. had yet another storm to weather. While we were contemplating the long and rough voyage he had passed, and thought he had only now to rest in a quiet haven, and with a fine sunsetting at the close of the evening of his life; clouds began to gather again, and seemed to threaten a wreck at the very entry of the port.*

He used to make excursions in the summer to different friends in

* In a MS. note on a letter, dated 15th Dec. 1797, he writes, "Though I am not so sensibly affected as I could wish, I hope I am truly affected by the frequent reviews I make of my past life. Perhaps the annals of thy church scarcely afford an instance in all respects so singular. Perhaps thy grace may have recovered some from an equal degree of apostacy, infidelity, and profligacy; but few of them have been redeemed from such a state of misery and depression as I was in, upon the coast of Africa, when thy unsought mercy wrought for my deliverance: but that such a wretch should not only be spared and pardoned, but reserved to the honour of preaching thy gospel, which he had blasphemed and renounced, and at length be placed in a very public situation, and favoured with acceptance and usefulness, both from the pulpit and the press: so that my poor name is known in most parts of the world, where there are any who know thee—this is wonderful indeed! The more thou hast exalted me, the more I ought to abase myself."

the country, endeavouring to make these visits profitable to them and their neighbours, by his continual prayers, and the expositions he gave of the scriptures read at their morning and evening worship. I have heard of some, who were first brought to the knowledge of themselves and of God by attending his exhortations on these occasions; for, indeed, besides what he undertook in a more stated way at the church, he seldom entered a room, but something both profitable and entertaining fell from his lips. After the death of Miss Cunningham and Mrs N., his companion in these summer excursions was his other niece, Miss Elizabeth Catlett. This young lady had also been brought up by Mr and Mrs N. with Miss Cunningham, and on the death of the two latter, she became the object of Mr N.'s naturally affectionate disposition. She also became quite necessary to him by her administrations in his latter years; she watched him, walked with him, visited wherever he went; when his sight failed, she read to him, divided his food, and was unto him all that a dutiful daughter could be.

But, in the year 1801, a nervous disorder seized her, by which Mr N. was obliged to submit to her being separated from him. During the twelvemonth it lasted, the weight of the affliction, added to his weight of years, seemed to overwhelm him. I extracted a few of his reflections on the occasion, written on some blank leaves in an edition of his Letters to a Wife, which he lent me on my undertaking these Memoirs, and subjoin them in a note.* It may give the reader pleasure to be informed, that Miss Catlett returned home—gradually recovered—and afterwards married a worthy man of the name of Smith.

It was with a mixture of delight and surprise, that the friends and hearers of this eminent servant of God beheld him bringing forth such a measure of fruit in extreme age. Though then almost eighty years old, his sight nearly gone, and incapable, through deafness, of joining in conversation, yet his public ministry was regularly continued, and maintained with a considerable degree of his former animation. His memory, indeed, was observed to fail, but his judgment in divine things still remained; and though some depression of spirits was observed, which he used to account for from his advanced age, his perception,

* "August 1, 1801. I now enter my 77th year. I have been exercised this year with a trying and unexpected change; but it is by thy appointment, my gracious Lord; and thou art unchangeably wise, good, and merciful. Thou gavest me my dear adopted child. Thou didst own my endeavours to bring her up for thee. I have no doubt that thou hast called her by thy grace. I thank thee for the many years comfort (ten) I have had in her, and for the attention and affection she has always shown me, exceeding that of most daughters to their own parents. Thou hast now tried me, as thou didst Abraham, in my old age; when my eyes are failing, and my strength declines. Thou hast called for my Isaac, who had so long been my chief stay and staff, but it was thy blessing that made her so. A nervous disorder has seized her, and I desire to leave her under thy care; and chiefly pray for myself, that I may be enabled to wait thy time and will, without betraying any signs of impatience or despondency unbecoming my profession and character. Hitherto thou hast helped me; and to thee I look for help in future. Let all issue in thy glory, that my friends and hearers may be encouraged by seeing how I am supported: let thy strength be manifested in my weakness, and thy grace be sufficent for me, and let all finally work together for our good. Amen. I aim to say from my heart, not my will, but thine be done. But though thou hast given a measure made my spirit willing, thou knowest, and I feel, that the flesh is weak. Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. Lord, I submit, subdue every rebellious thought that dares arise against thy will. Spare my eyes, if it please thee; but, above all, strengthen my faith and

taste, and zeal for the truths he had long received and taught, were evident. Like Simeon, having seen the salvation of the Lord, he now only waited and prayed to depart in peace.

After Mr N was turned of eighty, some of his friends feared he might continue his public ministrations too long; they marked not only his infirmities in the pulpit, but felt much on account of the decrease of his strength, and of his occasional depressions. Conversing with him in January 1806 on the latter, he observed, that he had experienced nothing which in the least affected the principles he had felt and taught; that his depressions were the natural result of fourscore years, and that, at any age, we can only enjoy that comfort from our principles which God is pleased to send. "But (replied I) in the article of public preaching, might it not be best to consider your work as done, and stop before you evidently discover you can speak no longer?" "I cannot stop," said he, raising his voice; What! shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?"

In every future visit I perceived old age making rapid strides. At length his friends found some difficulty in making themselves known to him: his sight, his hearing, and his recollection exceedingly failed; but, being mercifully kept from pain, he generally appeared easy and cheerful. Whatever he uttered was perfectly consistent with the principles he had so long and so honourably maintained. Calling to see him a few days before he died, with one of his most intimate friends, we could not make him recollect either of us; but seeing him afterwards, when sitting up in his chair, I found so much intellect remaining as produced a short and affectionate reply, though he was utterly incapable of conversation.

Mr N. declined in this very gradual way, till at length it was painful to ask him a question, or attempt to rouse faculties almost gone still his friends were anxious to get a word from him, and those friends who survive him will be as anxious to learn the state of his mind in his latest hours. It is quite natural thus to inquire, though it is not important, how such a decided character left this world. I have heard Mr N. say, when he has heard particular inquiry made about the last expressions of an eminent believer, "Tell me not how the man died, but how he lived."

Still I say it is natural to inquire, and I will meet the desire, not by trying to expand uninteresting particulars, but as far as I can collect encouraging facts; and I learn from a paper, kindly sent me by his family, all that is interesting and authentic.

About a month before Mr N.'s death, Mr Smith's neice was sitting by him, to whom he said, "It is a great thing to die; and when flesh and heart fail, to have God for the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever: I know whom I have believed, and he is able to keep that which I have committed, against that great day. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

When Mrs Smith came into the room, he said, "I have been medi-

tating on a subject, 'Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.'"

At another time he said, "More light, more love, more liberty—Hereafter I hope, when I shut my eyes on the things of time, I shall open them in a better world. What a thing it is to live under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty! I am going the way of all flesh." And when one replied, "The Lord is gracious," he answered, "If it were not so, how could I dare to stand before him?"

The Wednesday before he died, Mrs G— asked him if his mind was comfortable; he replied, "I am satisfied with the Lord's will."

Mr N. seemed sensible to his last hour, but expressed nothing remarkable after these words. He departed on the 21st, and was buried in the vault of his church the 31st of December 1807, having left the following injunction, in a letter for the direction of his executors.

"I propose writing an epitaph for myself, if it may be put up, on a plain marble tablet, near the vestry door, to the following purport:—

JOHN NEWTON, CLERK,
Once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour
JESUS CHRIST,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith he
Had long laboured to destroy,
Near 16 years at Olney in Bucks;
And — years in this church.
On Feb. 1, 1750, he married
MARY,
Daughter of the late George Catlett,
Of Chatham, Kent.
He resigned her to the Lord who gave her,
On the 15th of December 1790.

"And I earnestly desire, that no other monument, and no inscription but to this purport, may be attempted for me."

The following is a copy of the exordium of Mr Newton's will, dated June 13, 1803:—

"In the name of God, amen. I JOHN NEWTON, of Coleman Street B ldings, in the parish of St Stephen, Coleman Street, in the city of L don, Clerk, being through mercy in good health and of sound and di osing mind, memory, and understanding, although in the seventy-ei th year of my age, do, for the settling of my temporal concerns, a for the disposal of all the worldly estate which it hath pleased the L d in his good providence to give me, make this my last Will and T ament as follows. I commit my soul to my gracious God and S our, who mercifully spared and preserved me, when I was an a-

postate, a blasphemer, and an infidel, and delivered me from that state of misery on the coast of Africa into which my obstinate wickedness had plunged me; and who has been pleased to admit me (though most unworthy) to preach his glorious gospel. I rely with humble confidence upon the atonement and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, God and Man, which I have often proposed to others as the only foundation whereon a sinner can build his hope; trusting that he will guard and guide me through the uncertain remainder of my life, and that he will then admit me into his presence in his heavenly kingdom. I would have my body deposited in the vault under the parish church of St Mary Woolnoth, close to the coffins of my late dear wife and my dear niece Elizabeth Cunningham; and it is my desire, that my funeral may be performed with as little expense as possible, consistent with decency."———

REVIEW

OF

MR NEWTON'S CHARACTER.

THERE seems to be little need of giving a general character of Mr N. after the particulars which appear in the foregoing Memoirs. He unquestionably was the child of a peculiar providence, in every step of his progress; and his deep sense of the extraordinary dispensation through which he had passed, was the prominent topic in his conversation. Those who personally knew the man, could have no doubt of the probity with which his Narrative (singular as it may appear) was written. They, however, who could not view the subject of these Memoirs so nearly as his particular friends did, may wish to learn something farther of his character with respect to his LITERARY ATTAINMENTS—his MINISTRY—his FAMILY HABITS—his WRITINGS—and his FAMILIAR CONVERSATION.

Of his LITERATURE, we learn from his Narrative what he attained in the learned languages, and that by almost incredible efforts. Few men have undertaken such difficulties, under such disadvantages. It, therefore, seems more extraordinary that he should have attained so much, than that he should not have acquired more. Nor did he quit his pursuits of this kind, but in order to gain that knowledge which he deemed much more important. Whatever he conceived had a tendency to qualify him as "a scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God, bringing out of his treasury things new and old"—I say, in pursuit of this point, he might have adopted the apostle's expression, "One thing I do." By a principle so simply and firmly directed, he furnished his mind with much information: he had consulted the best old divines; had read the moderns of reputation with avidity; and was continually watching whatever might serve for analogies or illustrations, in the service of religion. "A minister," he used to say, "wherever he is, should be always in his study. He should look at every man, and at every thing, as capable of affording him some instruction." His mind, therefore, was ever intent on his calling—ever extracting something, even from the basest materials, which he could turn into gold.

In consequence of this incessant attention to his object, while many, whose early advantages greatly exceeded his, were found excelling Mr N. in the knowledge and investigation of some curious abstract, but very unimportant points; he was found vastly excelling them in points of infinitely higher importance to man. In the knowledge of God, of his word, and of the human heart, in its wants and resources, Newton would have stood among mere scholars as his name-sake the philosopher stood in science among ordinary men. I might say the same of some others who have set out late in the profession, but who, with a portion of Mr N.'s piety and ardour, have greatly outstripped those who have had every early advantage and encouragement. Men with specious titles and high connexions have received the rewards; while men, like Newton, without them, have done the work.

With respect to his MINISTRY, he appeared, perhaps, to least advantage in the pulpit; as he did not generally aim at accuracy in the composition of his sermons, nor at any address in the delivery of them. His utterance was far from clear, and his attitudes ungraceful. He possessed, however, so much affection for his people, and zeal for their best interests, that the defect of his manner was of little consideration with his constant hearers: at the same time, his capacity, and habit of entering into their trials and experience, gave the highest interest to his ministry among them. Besides which, he frequently interspersed the most brilliant allusions, and brought forward such happy illustration of his subject, and those with so much unction on his own heart, as melted and enlarged theirs. The parent-like tenderness and affection which accompanied his instruction, made them prefer him to preachers who, on other accounts, were much more generally popular. It ought also to be noted, that, amidst the extravagant notions and unscriptural positions, which have sometimes disgraced the religious world, Mr N. never departed, in any instance, from soundly and seriously promulgating the "faith once delivered to the saints," of which his writings will remain the best evidence. His doctrine was strictly that of the Church of England, urged on the consciences of men in the most practical and experimental manner. "I hope," said he one day to me, smiling, "I hope I am upon the whole a scriptural preacher: for I find I am considered as an Arminian among the high Calvinists, and as a Calvinist among the strenuous Arminians."

I never observed any thing like bigotry in his ministerial character, though he seemed at all times to appreciate the beauty of order, and its good effects in the ministry. He had formerly been intimately connected with some highly respectable ministers among the Dissenters, and retained a cordial regard for many to the last. He considered the strong prejudices which attach to both Churchmen and Dissenters, as arising more from education than from principle. But being himself both a clergyman and an incumbent in the Church of England, he wished to be consistent. In public, therefore, he felt he could not act with some ministers, whom he thought truly good men, and to whom he cordially wished success in their endeavours; and he patiently met

the consequence. They called him a bigot, and he in return prayed for them, that they might not be really such.

He had formerly taken much pains in composing his sermons, as I could perceive in one MS. which I looked through; and even latterly, I have known him, whenever he felt it necessary, produce admirable plans for the pulpit. I own I thought his judgment deficient in not deeming such preparation necessary at all times. I have sat in pain when he has spoken unguardedly in this way before young ministers: men, who, with but comparatively slight degrees of his information and experience, would draw encouragement to ascend the pulpit with but little previous study of their subject. A minister is not to be blamed, who cannot rise to qualifications which some of his brethren have attained; but he is certainly bound to improve his own talent to the utmost of his power: he is not to cover his sloth, his love of company, or his disposition to attend a wealthy patron, with the pretence of depending entirely on divine influence. Timothy had at least as good ground for expecting such influence as any of his successors in the ministry; and yet the apostle admonishes him to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine—not to neglect the gift that was in him —to meditate upon these things—to give himself wholly to them, that his profiting might appear to all."

Mr N. regularly preached on the Sunday morning and evening at St Mary Woolnoth, and also on the Wednesday morning. After he was turned of seventy, he often undertook to assist other clergymen sometimes even to the preaching six sermons in the space of a week What was more extraordinary, he continued his usual course of preaching at his own church after he was fourscore years old, and that, when he could no longer see to read his text! His memory and voice sometimes failed him; but it was remarked, that, at this great age, he was nowhere more collected or lively than in the pulpit. He was punctual as to time with his congregation; and preached every first Sunday evening in the month on relative duties. Mr Alderman Lea regularly sent his carriage to convey him to the church, and Mr Bates sent his servant to attend him in the pulpit; which friendly assistance was continued till Mr N. could appear no longer in public.

His ministerial visits were exemplary. I do not recollect one, though favoured with many, in which his general information and lively genius did not communicate instruction, and his affectionate and condescending sympathy did not leave comfort.

Truth demands it should be said, that he did not always administer consolation, nor give an account of characters, with sufficient discrimination. His talent did not lie in "discerning of spirits." I never saw him so much moved as when any friend endeavoured to correct his errors in this respect. His credulity seemed to arise from the consciousness he had of his own integrity, and from that sort of parental fondness which he bore to all his friends, real or pretended. I knew one since dead, whom he thus described, while living—"He is certainly an odd man, and has his failings; but he has great integrity,

and I hope is going to heaven." Whereas almost all who knew him thought the man should go first into the pillory!

In his FAMILY Mr N. might be admired more safely than imitated. His excessive attachment to Mrs N. is so fully displayed in his Narrative, and confirmed in the two volumes he thought proper to publish, entitled, "Letters to a Wife," that the reader will need no information on this subject. Some of his friends wished this violent attachment had been cast more into the shade, as tending to furnish a spur, where human nature generally needs a curb. He used, indeed, to speak of such attachments, in the abstract, as idolatry; though his own was providentially ordered to be the main hinge on which his preservation and deliverance turned, while in his worst state. Good men, however, cannot be too cautious how they give sanction, by their expressions or example, to a passion, which, when not under sober regulation, has overwhelmed not only families, but states, with disgrace and ruin.

With his unusual degree of benevolence and affection, it was not extraordinary that the spiritual interests of his servants were brought forward, and examined severally every Sunday afternoon; and that, being treated like children, they should grow old in his service. In short, Mr N could live no longer than he could love; it is no wonder, therefore, if his nieces had more of his heart than is generally afforded to their own children by the fondest parents. It has already been mentioned, that his house was an asylum for the perplexed or afflicted. Young ministers were peculiarly the objects of his attention: he instructed them, he encouraged them, he warned them; and might truly be said to be a father in Christ, "spending and being spent" for the interest of his church. In order thus to execute the various avocations of the day, he used to rise early; he seldom was found abroad in the evening, and was exact in his appointments.

Of his WRITINGS, I think little need be said here; they are in wide circulation, and best speak for themselves. What I shall observe upon them, therefore, will be general and cursory.

The Sermons Mr N. published at Liverpool, after being refused on his first application for Orders, were intended to show what he would have preached, had he been admitted; they are highly creditable to his understanding and to his heart. The facility with which he attained so much of the learned languages, seems partly accounted for, from his being able to acquire, so early, a neat and natural style in his own language, and that under such evident disadvantages. His Review of Ecclesiastical History, so far as it is proceeded, has been much esteemed, and, if it had done no more than excite the Rev. J. Milner (as that most valuable and instructive author informs us it did) to pursue Mr N.'s idea more largely, it was sufficient success. Before this, the world seems to have lost sight of a history of real Christianity, and to have been content with what, for the most part, was but an account of the ambition and politics of secular men, assuming the Christian name.

It must be evident to any one, who observes the spirit of all his sermons, hymns, tracts, &c. that nothing is aimed at which should be met by critical investigation. In the preface to his Hymns, he remarks,

"Though I would not offend readers of taste by a wilful coarseness and negligence, I do not write professedly for them. I have simply declared my own views and feelings, as I might have done if I had composed hymns in some of the newly discovered islands in the South Sea, where no person had any knowledge of the name of Jesus but myself."

To dwell, therefore, with a critical eye on this part of his public character, would be absurd and impertinent, and to erect a tribunal to which he seems not amenable. He appears to have paid no regard to a nice ear, or an accurate reviewer; but, preferring a style at once neat and perspicuous, to have laid out himself entirely for the service of the church of God, and more especially for the tried and experienced part of its members.

His chief excellence seemed to lie in the easy and natural style of his epistolary correspondence. His letters will be read while real religion exists; and they are the best draught of his own mind.

He had so largely communicated to his friends in this way, that I have heard him say, "he thought, if his letters were collected, they would make several folios." He selected many of these for publication, and expressed a hope, that no other person would take that liberty with the rest, which were so widely spread abroad. In this, however, he was disappointed and grieved, as he once remarked to me; and for which reason I do not annex any letters that I received from him. He esteemed that collection published under the title of "Cardiphonia" as the most useful of his writings, and mentioned various instances of the benefits which he heard they had conveyed to many.

His Apologia, or defence of conformity, was written on occasion of some reflections (perhaps only jocular) cast on him at that time. His Letters to a Wife, written during his three voyages to Africa, and published 1793, have been received with less satisfaction than most of his other writings. While, however, his advanced age and inordinate fondness may be pleaded for this publication, care should be taken lest men fall into a contrary extreme; and suppose that temper to be their wisdom, which leads them to avoid another, which they consider as his weakness. But his Messiah, before mentioned, his Letters of the Rev. Mr Vanlier, chaplain at the Cape, his Memoirs of the Rev. John Cowper (brother to the poet), and those of the Rev. Mr Grimshaw of Yorkshire, together with his single sermons and tracts, have been well received, and will remain a public benefit.

I recollect reading a MS. which Mr N. lent me, containing a correspondence that had passed between himself and the Rev. Dr Dixon, principal of St Edmund Hall, Oxford; and another MS. of a correspondence between him and the late Rev. Martin Madan. They would have been very interesting to the public, particularly the latter, and the striking evidences of Mr N.'s humility, piety, and faithfulness; reasons of delicacy led him to commit the whole to the flames.

To speak of his writings in the mass, they certainly possess what many have aimed at, but very few attained, namely, originality. They are the language of the heart; they show a deep experience of

its religious feelings, a continual anxiety to sympathize with man in his wants, and to direct him to his only resources.

His CONVERSATION, and familiar habits with his friends, were more peculiar, amusing, and instructive, than any I ever witnessed. It is difficult to convey a clear idea of them by description. I venture, therefore, to add a few pages of what I may call his *table-talk*, which I took down at different times, both in company and in private, from his lips. Such a collection of printed remarks will not have so much point as when spoken in connexion with the occasion that produced them: they must appear to considerable disadvantage thus detached, and candid allowance should be made by the reader on this account. They, however, who had the privilege of Mr N.'s conversation when living, cannot but recognize the speaker in most of them, and derive both profit and pleasure from these remains of their late valuable friend; and such as had not, will (if I do not mistake) think them the most valuable part of this book.

REMARKS

MADE BY MR NEWTON

IN FAMILIAR CONVERSATION

While the mariner uses the loadstone, the philosopher may attempt to investigate the cause; but after all, in steering through the ocean, he can make no other use of it than the mariner.

If an angel were sent to find the most perfect man, he would probably not find him composing a body of divinity, but perhaps a cripple in a poor-house, whom the parish wish dead, and humbled before God with far lower thoughts of himself than others think of him.

When a Christian goes into the world, because he sees it is his call, yet, while he feels it also his cross, it will not hurt him.

Satan will seldom come to a Christian with a gross temptation: a green log and a candle may be safely left together; but bring a few shavings, then some small sticks, and then larger, and you may soon bring the green log to ashes.

If two angels came down from heaven to execute a divine command, and one was appointed to conduct an empire, and the other to sweep a street in it, they would feel no inclination to choose employments.

The post of honour in an army is not with the baggage, nor with the women.

What some call providential openings are often powerful temptations; the heart, in wandering, cries, Here is a way opened before me; but, perhaps, not to be trodden, but rejected.

Young people marry as others study navigation, by the fire-side. If they marry unsuitably, they can scarcely bring things to rule, but, like sailors, they must sail as near the wind as they can. I feel myself like a traveller with his wife in his chaise and one; if the ground is smooth, and she keep the right pace, and is willing to deliver the reins when I ask for them, I am always willing to let her drive.

I should have thought mowers very idle people; but they work while they whet their scythes. Now devotedness to God, whether it mows or whets the scythe, still goes on with the work.

A Christian should never plead spirituality for being a sloven; if he be but a shoe-cleaner, he should be the best in the parish.

In choosing my text, I feel myself like a servant to whom a key has been given, which opens a particular drawer, but who has not the bunch of keys, which open all the drawers. I therefore expect to be helped to only one text at a time.

My course of study, like that of a surgeon, has principally consisted in walking the hospital.

In divinity, as well as in other professions, there are the little artists. A man may be able to execute the buttons of a statue very neatly, but I could not call him an able artist. There is an air, there is a taste to which his narrow capacity cannot reach. Now in the church, there are your dexterous button-makers.

My principal method for defeating heresy, is by establishing truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares; now if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts.

When some people talk of religion, they mean they have heard so many sermons, and performed so many devotions, and thus mistake the means for the end. But true religion is an habitual recollection of God and intention to serve him, and thus turns every thing into gold. We are apt to suppose that we need something splendid to evince our devotion, but true devotion equals things—washing plates, and cleaning shoes, is a high office, if performed in a right spirit. If three angels were sent to earth, they would feel perfect indifference who should perform the part of prime-minister, parish-minister, or watchman.

When a ship goes to sea, among a vast variety of its articles and circumstances, there is but one object regarded, namely, doing the business of the voyage: every bucket is employed with respect to that.

Many have puzzled themselves about the origin of evil; I observe there is evil, and that there is a way to escape it, and with this I begin and end.

Consecrated things under the law were first sprinkled with blood, and then anointed with oil, and thenceforward were no more common. Thus under the gospel, every Christian has been a common vessel for profane purposes; but, when sprinkled and anointed, he becomes separated and consecrated to God.

I would not give a straw for that assurance, which sin will not damp. If David had come from his adultry, and had talked of his assurance at that time, I should have despised his speech.

A spirit of adoption is the spirit of a child; he may disoblige his father, yet he is not afraid of being turned out of doors. The union is not dissolved, though the communion is. He is not well with his father, therefore must be unhappy, as their interests are inseparable.

We often seek to apply cordials when the patient is not prepared for them, and it is the patient's advantage, that he cannot take a medicine when prematurely offered. When a man comes to me, and says, "I am quite happy," I am not sorry to find him come again with some fears. I never saw a work stand well without a check. "I only want,"

says one, "to be sure of being safe, and then I will go on." No; perhaps, then you will go off.

For an old Christian to say to a young one, "Stand in my evidence," is like a man, who has with difficulty climbed by a ladder or scaffolding to the top of the house, and cries to one at the bottom, "This is the place for a prospect—come up at a step."

A Christian, like a miser, will ask the price of his pleasures: the miser has no objection to go to Brighton, but always asks what it will cost? The miser, indeed, has this advantage, that he is always in the same frame.

A Christian in the world is like a man, who has had a long intimacy with one, whom at length he finds out was the murderer of a kind father; the intimacy, after this, will surely be broken.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." A man may live in a deep mine in Hungary, never having seen the light of the sun; he may have received accounts of prospects, and by the help of a candle, may have examined a few engravings of them: but let him be brought out of the mine, and set on the mountain, what a difference appears!

In our fallen state, we are a sort of solecism in the universe: other animals are faithful to their instincts; lambs do not wish to swim, nor fish to feed in a meadow. If the sun were a rational creature he would delight to shine, otherwise he ought to be extinguished.

Candour will always allow much for inexperience. I have been thirty years forming my own views, and in the course of this time some of my hills have been sinking, and some of my valleys have risen; but how unreasonable would it be to expect all this should take place in another person, and that in the course of a year or two.

Candour forbids us to estimate a character from its accidental blots. Yet it is thus that David, and others have been treated.

Apollos met with two candid people in the church: they neither ran away because he was legal, nor were carried away because he was eloquent.

There is the analogy of faith; it is a master-key, which not only opens particular doors, but carries you through the whole house; but an attachment to a rigid system is dangerous. Luther once turned out the epistle of St James, because it disturbed his system. Dr Owen will be ashamed of his wisdom and clearness, five minutes after he has been in heaven. I shall preach, perhaps, very usefully upon two opposite texts, while kept apart; but if I attempt nicely to reconcile them, it is ten to one if I don't begin to bungle.

I can conceive a living man without an arm or a leg, but not without a head or a heart: so there are some truths essential to vital religion, and which all awakened souls are taught.

Apostacy, in all its branches, takes its rise from atheism. "I have set the Lord always before me," &c. The doctrine of omnipresence is universally allowed.

We are surprised at the fall of a famous professor; but, in the sight God, the man was gone before; it is only we that have now first

discovered it. "He that despiseth small things, shall fall by little and little."

There are critical times of danger. After great services, honours, and consolations, we should stand upon our guard. Noah, Lot, David, and Solomon, fell in these circumstances. Satan is a footpad: a footpad will not attack a man in going to the bank, but in returning with his pocket full of money.

A Christian is like a young nobleman, who, on going to receive his estate, is at first enchanted by its prospects; this in a course of time may wear off, but a sense of the value of the estate grows daily.

When we first enter into the divine life, we propose to grow rich; God's plan is to make us feel poor.

Good men have need to take heed of building upon groundless impressions. Mr Whitefield had a son, which he imagined was born to be a very extraordinary man: but the son soon died, and the father was cured of his mistake.

I remember, in going to undertake the care of a congregation, I was reading, as I walked in a green lane, "Fear not, Paul, I have much people in this city;" but I soon afterwards was disappointed in finding that Paul was not John, and that Corinth was not Warwick.

Christ has taken our nature into heaven to represent us; and has left us on earth, with his nature, to represent him.

Worldly men will be true to their principles; and if we were as true to ours, the visits between the two parties would be short and seldom.

A Christian in the world is like a man transacting his affairs in the rain. He will not suddenly leave his client, because it rains; but the moment the business is done, he is off: as it is said in the Acts, "Being let go, they went to their own company."

When a man is joined to Christ, Christ says to him, as it was once said to the Levite, "Let all thy wants lie upon me, only abide not in the street."

God's word is certainly a restraint; but it is such a restraint as the irons which prevent children from getting into the fire.

The scriptures are so full, that every case may be found in them. A rake went into a church, and tried to decoy a girl by saying, "Why do you attend to such stuff as these scriptures?" "Because," said she, "they tell me, that in the last days there shall come such scoffers as you."

God deals with us as we do with our children: he first speaks, then gives a gentle stroke, at last a blow.

The religion of a sinner stands on two pillars; namely, what Christ did for us in his flesh, and what he performs in us by his Spirit. Most errors arise from an attempt to separate these two.

We blame an Arminian for his want of submission to divine sovereignty; yet let a shower of rain fall on a suit of new clothes, and we cannot submit ourselves.

Man is not taught any thing to purpose till God becomes his teacher, and then the glare of the world is put out, and the value of the soul rises in full view A man's present sentiments may not be accurate.

but we make too much of sentiments. We pass a field with a few blades, we call it a field of wheat; but here is no wheat; no, not in perfection, but wheat is sown, and full ears may be expected.

The word temperance, in the New Testament, signifies self-possession; it is a disposition suitable to one who has a race to run, and therefore will not load his pockets with lead.

One reason why we must not attempt to pull up the tares which grow among the wheat is, that we have not skill for the work; like a weeder, whom Mrs N. employed in my garden at Olney, who for weeds pulled up some of her favourite flowers.

Contrivers of systems on earth are like contrivers of systems in the heavens; where the sun and moon keep the same course, in spite of the philosophers.

I endeavour to walk through the world as a physician goes through Bedlam: the patients make a noise, pester him with impertinence, and hinder him in his business; but he does the best he can, and so gets through.

A man always in society, is one always on the spend: on the other hand, a mere solitary is at his best but a candle in an empty room.

If we were upon the watch for improvement, the common news of the day would furnish it: the falling of the tower of Siloam, and the slaughter of the Galileans, were the news of the day, which our Lord improved.

The generality make out their righteousness by comparing themselves with some others whom they think worse: thus, a woman of the town, who was rotting in the Lock Hospital, was offended at a minister speaking to her as a sinner, because she had never picked a pocket.

Take away a toy from a child, and give him another, and he is satisfied; but if he be hungry, no toy will do. Thus, as new-born babes, true believers desire the sincere milk of the word; and the desire of grace, in this way, is grace.

One said, that the great saints in the calendar were many of them poor sinners; Mr N. replied, they were poor saints indeed, if they did not feel that they were great sinners.

A wise man looks upon men as he does upon horses; and considers their caparisons of title, wealth, and place, but as harness.

The force of what we deliver from the pulpit is often lost by a starched, and what is often called a correct style, and especially by adding meretricious ornaments. I called upon a lady who had been robbed, and she gave me a striking account of the fact; but had she put it in heroics, I should neither so well have understood her, nor been so well convinced that she was robbed.

When a man says he received a blessing under a sermon, I begin to inquire who this man is, that speaks of the help he has received. The Roman people proved the effect they received under a sermon of Antony when they flew to avenge the death of Cæsar.

The Lord has reasons, far beyond our ken, for opening a wide door, while he stops the mouth of a useful preacher. John Bunyan would

not have done half the good he did, if he had remained preaching in Bedford, instead of being shut up in Bedford prison.

If I could go to France, and give every man in it a right and peaceable mind by my labour, I should have a statue; but to produce such an effect in the conversion of one soul would be a far greater achievement.

Ministers would over-rate their labours, if they did not think it worth while to be born and spend ten thousand years in labour and contempt, to recover one soul.

Don't tell me of your feelings. A traveller would be glad of fine weather, but, if he be a man of business, he will go on. Bunyan says, You must not judge of a man's haste by his horse; for when the horse can hardly move, you may see by the rider's urging him, what a hurry he is in.

A man and a beast may stand upon the same mountain, and even touch one another; yet they are in two different worlds: the beast perceives nothing but the grass; but the man contemplates the prospect, and thinks of a thousand remote things. Thus a Christian may be solitary at a full Exchange; he can converse with the people there upon trade, politics, and the stocks; but they cannot talk with him upon the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

Love and fear are like the sun and moon, seldom seen together.

Two men go into a wood with their guns, and one fires as often as the other: but one kills a great quantity of game, because he fires with shot. Some, like Zaccheus, think they sit very snug in a corner, and are brought down much before they expect it.

I dreamt one night that I saw Matthew Henry lay open at this text, "Let your women keep silence in the churches," and thought I read the following note at bottom: "Note—We see the reason why women are forbid to preach the gospel, for they would persuade without argument, and reprove without giving offence."

It is a mere fallacy to talk of the sins of a short life. The sinner is always a sinner. Put a pump into a river, you may throw out some water, but the river remains.

Professors, who own the doctrines of free grace, often act inconsistently with their own principles, when they are angry at the defects of others. A company of travellers fall into a pit, one of them gets a passenger to draw him out: now he should not be angry with the rest for falling in, nor because they are not yet out, as he is. He did not pull himself out; instead, therefore, of reproaching them, he should show them pity; he should avoid at any rate going down upon their ground again, and show how much better and happier he is upon his own. We should take care that we do not make our profession of religion a receipt in full for all other obligations. A man, truly illuminated, will no more despise others, than Bartimeus, after his own eyes were opened, would take a stick, and beat every blind man he met.

We are much mistaken in supposing, that the removal of a particular obstruction would satisfy the objector. Suppose I am in bed, and

want to know whether it be light, it is not enough if I draw the curtain; for if there be light, I must have eyes to see it.

Too deep a consideration of eternal realities might unfit a man for his present circumstances. Walking through St Bartholomew's Hospital or Bedlam must deeply affect a feeling mind, but in reality this world is a far worse scene; it has but two wards, in the one, men are miserable, in the other mad.

Some preachers near Olney dwelt on the doctrine of predestination; an old woman said—"Ah! I have long settled that point; for if God had not chosen me before I was born, I am sure he would have seen nothing in me to have chosen me for afterwards."

Law has swept away Warburton's cobweb, with a single brush. Abel pleased God, but Cain killed him; therefore, it was a dangerous thing to please God, if there were no future state.

I see the unprofitableness of controversy in the case of Job and his friends; for if God had not interposed, and they had lived to this day, they would have continued the dispute.

It is pure mercy that negatives a particular request. A miser would pray very earnestly for gold, if he believed prayer would gain it; whereas, if Christ had any favour to him, he would take his gold away. A child walks in the garden in spring, and sees cherries; he knows they are good fruit, and therefore asks for them. "No, my dear," says the father, "they are not yet ripe: stay till the season."

If I cannot take pleasure in infirmities, I can sometimes feel the profit of them. I can conceive a king to pardon a rebel, and take him into his family, and then say, "I appoint you for a season to wear a fetter. At a certain season I will send a messenger to knock it off. In the mean time this fetter will serve to remind you of your state; it may humble you, and restrain you from rambling."

Some Christians, at a glance, seem of a superior order, and are not; they want a certain quality. At a florist's feast the other day, a certain flower was determined to bear the bell, but it was found to be an artificial flower; there is a quality called growth, which it had not.

Doctor Taylor of Norwich said to me, "Sir, I have collated every word in the Hebrew Scriptures seventeen times; and it is very strange, if the doctrine of atonement you hold should not have been found by me." I am not surprised at this: I once went to light my candle with the extinguisher on it. Now, prejudices from education, learning, &c. often form an extinguisher. It is not enough that you bring the candle, you must remove the extinguisher.

I measure ministers by square measure. I have no idea of the size of a table, if you only tell me how long it is; but if you also say how broad, I can tell its dimensions. So when you tell me what a man is in the pulpit, you must also tell me what he is out of it, or I shall not know his size.

If Nebuchadnezzar's image was of solid gold, and every worshipper was to have a bit of it, I fear our nation, as well as his, would be ready to fall down before it.

There were two sorts of Calvinists at Olney, and they always reminded me of the two baskets of Jeremiah's figs.

A man should be born to high things not to lose himself in them Slaters will walk on the ridge of a house with ease, which would turn our heads.

Much depends on the way we come into trouble. Paul and Jonah were both in a storm, but in very different circumstances.

I have read of many wicked Popes, but the worst Pope I ever met with is Pope SELF.

The men of this world are children. Offer a child an apple and a bank-note, he will doubtless choose the apple.

A pious gentlewoman told me of her pottery being burnt. "I congratulate you, madam," said I, "in possessing something you cannot lose."

The heir of a great estate, while a child, thinks more of a few shillings in his pocket, than of his inheritance. So a Christian is often more elated by some frame of heart, than by his title to glory.

A dutiful child is ever looking forward to the holidays, when he shall return to his father; but he does not think of running from school before.

The gospel is a proclamation of free mercy to guilty creatures—an act of grace to rebels. Now, though a rebel should throw away his pistols, and determine to go into the woods, and make his mind better before he goes to court and pleads the act; he may, indeed not be found in arms, yet, being taken in his reforming scheme, he will be hanged.

The devil told a lie when he said, "All these things are mine, and to whomsoever I will I give them:" for if he had the disposal of preferments, since he knows the effect of them, you and I, brother C—, should soon be dignitaries.

Man is made capable of three births—by nature he enters the present world—by grace into spiritual light and life—by death into glory.

In my imagination, I sometimes fancy I could make a perfect minister. I take the eloquence of ——, the knowledge of ——, the zeal of ——, and the pastoral meeknes, tenderness, and piety of ——; then putting them all together into one man, I say to myself, this would be a perfect minister. Now, there is One who, if he chose it, could actually do this, but he never did; he has seen fit to do otherwise, and to divide these gifts to every man severally as he will.

I feel like a man, who has no money in his pocket, but is allowed to draw for all he wants upon one infinitely rich: I am, therefore, at once both a beggar and a rich man.

I went one day to Mrs G——'s, just after she had lost all her fortune; I could not be surprised to find her in tears, but she said, "I suppose you think I am crying for my loss: but that is not the case—I am now weeping to think I should feel so much uneasiness on the account." After that, I never heard her speak again upon the subject as long as she lived.—Why, now, this is just as it should be.—Suppose a man was going to York to take possession of a large estate, and his chaise should break down a mile before he got to the city, which oblig-

ed him to walk the rest of the way; what a fool we should think him if we saw him wringing his hands, and blubbering out all the remaining mile, "My chaise is broken! my chaise is broken!

I have many books that I cannot sit down to read; they are, indeed, good and sound; but, like halfpence, there goes a great quantity to a little amount. There are silver books, and a very few golden books; but I have one book worth more than all, called the Bible, and that is a book of bank-notes.

I conclude these remarks, not because my memorandum-book is exhausted, but lest the reader should think I forget the old maxim, *ne quid nimis*. No undue liberty, however, has been taken in publishing Mr N.'s private conversation; since all the above remarks were submitted to him, as intended for this publication, and were approved.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE difference of mental improvement, among men, seems very much to depend on their capacity and habit of gathering instruction from the objects which are continually presented to their observation. Two men behold the same fact: one of them is in the habit of drawing such remarks and inferences as the fact affords, and learns something from every thing he sees; while the other sees the same fact, and perhaps with a momentary admiration, but lets it pass without making so much as one profitable reflection on the occasion. The excursions of the bee and the butterfly present an exact emblem of these two characters.

I have present to my mind an acquaintance, who has seen more of the outside of the world than most men: he has lived in most countries of the civilized world; yet I scarcely know a man of a less improved mind. With every external advantage, he has learned nothing to any useful purpose. He seems to have passed from flower to flower without extracting a drop of honey; and now he tires all his friends with the frivolous garrulity of a capricious, vacant, and petulant old age.

I wish the reader of these Memoirs may avoid such an error in passing over the history here laid before him. An extraordinary train of facts is presented to his observation; and if "the proper study of mankind is man," the history before us will surely furnish important matter of the kind, to the eye of every wise moral traveller.

I would here call the attention of three classes of men to a single point of prime importance; namely, to the efficacy and excellency of real Christianity, as exhibited in the principles and practice of the subject of these Memoirs.

I. Suppose the reader to be so unhappy (though his misfortune may be least perceived by himself) as to be led astray by bad society, in conjunction with "an evil heart of unbelief." I will suppose him to be now in the state in which Mr N. describes himself formerly to have been, and in which also the writer of these Memoirs once was. I will suppose him to be given up to "believe his own lie;" and that he may be in the habit of thinking, that God, when he made man, left him to find his way, without any express revelation of the mind and will of his Maker and Governor; or, at most, that he is left to the only rule in morals, which nature may be supposed to present. What that way is, which such a thinker will take, is sufficiently evident from the ge-

neral course and habits of unbelievers.—But there is a conscience in man. Conscience, in sober moments, often alarms the most stout-hearted. When such an unbeliever meets an overwhelming providence, or lies on a death-bed, he will probably awake to a strong sense of his real condition. He will feel, if not very hardened indeed, in what a forlorn, unprovided, and dangerous state he exists. Life is the moment in which only this sceptical presumption can continue; and, when it is terminating, where is he to set the sole of his foot? He wildly contemplates the book of nature, in which he may have been persuaded, that man may read all he needs to know; but the forlorn outcast sees nothing there to meet his case as a sinner. Infinite power, wisdom, contrivance, general provision alone appear; but nothing of that further and distinct information, which a dying offender needs. He wants footing, and finds none. He needs the hand of a friend to grasp, but none is seen. Possibilities shock his apprehension. He may, perhaps, discern, that the present system has a moral government, which frowns upon guilt; and, for aught he knows to the contrary, the next scene may present a Judge upon his throne of justice—this world, his present idol, vanished like smoke—and quick and dead called to give their account. Where then is he?—an atom of guilt and wretchedness! All this, I say, may be, for aught he knows to the contrary. But the express and well-authenticated revelation, which that Judge hath sent to man, tells us plainly that all this shall be, and that every eye shall behold it!

"Be it so," such a reader may reply, "still I am what I am. My habits of thinking are fixed; and I perceive my habits of life can only be decently borne out by my profession of unbelief. Both are now inveterate. Nor do I see, all things considered, what can be done in my case. How can I adopt the Christian revelation? and what could it do for me if I could?" I answer by calling your attention to the fact before us. What was the case of John Newton?

Could any one be more deeply sunk in depravity, in profligacy, in infidelity, than he? Can you even conceive a rational creature more degraded, or more hardened in his evil habits? Would you attempt to recover such a mind by arguments, drawn from the advantage which virtue has over vice? or by rousing his attention to the duties of natural religion? or the possible consequences of a future retribution? He would have gone on thinking he had made the most of his circumstances, in his practice of catching fish, and eating them almost raw—He would sullenly have proceeded to sleep through the drying of his one shirt, which he had just washed on the rock, and put on wet—He would, with a savage ferocity, have watched an opportunity for murdering his master—He would have drowned all reflection in a drunken revel, and overwhelmed all remonstrance by belching out newly-invented blasphemies; and then sought to rush headlong, in a drunken paroxysm, into the ocean.

Here is certainly presented the utmost pitch of a depraved and a degraded nature, nor does it seem possible for Satan to carry his point

farther with a man—except in one single instance, namely, by the final disbelief of a remedy.

Now, by God's help, this divine remedy was applied, and its efficacy demonstrated, of which there are thousands of living witnesses. A plain matter of fact is before us. It pleased God, by a train of dispensations, that this prodigal should "come to himself." He is made to feel his wants and misery. He follows the "light shining in a dark place." He calls for help. He is made willing to follow his guide. He proceeds with implicit confidence: and now let us examine to what, at length, he is brought; and also by what means.

I speak of a matter of fact—whither is he brought? He is brought from the basest, meanest, under-trodden state of slavery—from a state of mind still more degraded, being "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating"—wanting nothing of a complete devil but his powers. This man is brought, I say, to be a faithful and zealous servant of his God; an able and laborious minister of Christ; a useful and benevolent friend to his neighbour; wise to secure the salvation of his own soul, and wise to win the souls of others.

Consider also the means by which he was brought. It was not by the arguments of philosophers, or the rational considerations of what is called natural religion. Mr N.'s own account informs us, that the peculiar discoveries of revealed truth gradually broke in upon his mind; till, at length, he was made sensible that there was a remedy provided in the gospel, and which was fully sufficient to meet even his case, and he found that, and that only, to be "the power of God unto salvation."

The result, therefore, which should be drawn from these premises is the following:—There exists a desperate disorder in the world, called sin. Heathens as well as Christians have marked its malignant influence; they have tried various expedients, which have been prescribed for its cure, or at least its mitigation; but no means, except God's own appointed means, have been discovered, that have been able to relieve so much as a single individual. Yet, strange to say, this *medicina mentis* of God's own appointment, to which only he has promised a peculiar blessing, and by which he is daily recovering men in the most desperate circumstances, who actually employ it: strange to say, this remedy still remains a stumbling block—is counted foolishness—insomuch, that many will rather dash this cup of salvation from the lips of a profligate, like Newton, when disposed to receive it, than he should obtain relief that way. Their conduct seems to say, "Rather let such a wretch go on in his profligacy, than the gospel be acknowledged to be the wisdom and the power of God."

Not that the case of Mr N., here presented to the consideration of an unbeliever, is brought forward as if the gospel needed any farther evidence, or has occasion for facts of our own time to give it additional authenticity; but we are directed to regard the "cloud of witnesses," among which our departed brother was distinguished; "and though now dead, yet speaketh." May the reader have ears to hear the important report!

Does the question return, therefore, as to what the unbeliever should do? Let him, after seriously considering what is here advanced, consider also what conduct is becoming a responsible, or at least a rational creature? Surely it becomes such a one to avoid all means of stifling the voice of conscience whenever it begins to speak; to regard the voice of God yet speaking to him in the revelation of his grace, and that much more humbly and seriously than such persons are wont to do. It becomes him, if he have any regard to the interest of his own soul, or the souls of his fellow-creatures, to give no countenance, by his declarations or example, to the senseless cavils, and indecent scoffs, by which the profligate aim to cloak the disorders of their hearts; by which vanity aims at distinction, and half-thinkers affect depth. The person I am now speaking to cannot but observe how much the judgment becomes the dupe of the passions. "If the veil be upon the heart, it will be upon every thing." We need not only an object presented, but an organ to discern it. Now the gospel, only, affords both these. Mr N. becomes an instructive example in this respect to the unbeliever. "One of the first helps," says he, "I received (in consequence of a determination to examine the New Testament more carefully) was from Luke vi. 13, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' I had been sensible, that to profess faith in Jesus Christ, when, in reality, I did not believe his history, was no better than a mockery of the heart-searching God; but here I found a Spirit spoken of, which was to be communicated to those who ask it. Upon this I reasoned thus: if this book be true, the promise in this passage must be true likewise. I have need of that very Spirit by which the whole was written, in order to understand it aright. He has engaged here, to give that Spirit to those who ask; and if it be of God, he will make good his own word."

A man, therefore, who is found in this unhappy state, but not judicially hardened in it, should mark this stage of Mr N.'s recovery, and attend to the facts and evidences of the power and excellency of real religion, such as this before him. He should appreciate that gospel, which it has pleased God to employ as his instrument for displaying the wonders of his might in the moral world. He should pray that he may experience the power of it in his own heart, and thus not lose the additional benefit of the cases presented to him in Memoirs like these; a case probably far exceeding his own in the malignity of its symptoms. Let him also consider, that, while such convictions can produce no real loss to him, they may secure advantages beyond calculation. He may not be able at present to comprehend how "godliness is profitable for all things, in having not only the promise of the life that now is, but that which is to come;" but he may see, as a rational creature, that, at the very lowest estimation, he has taken a safe side, by embracing the only hope set before him: and on this ground it is clearly demonstrable, that not only the grossest folly must attach to

the rejector of a revelation attended with such accumulated evidences, but also actual guilt, and the highest ingratitude and presumption.

II. But there is another class of men, to whom I would recommend a serious consideration of Mr N.'s religious character and principles. The persons whom I am now addressing are convinced of the truth of revelation, and some of them ably contend for it against unbelievers. They are also conscientious—they are often useful in society—and are sometimes found amiable and benevolent: they are even religious, according to their views of religion; and some of them are exact in their devotions. Yet from certain morbid symptoms, they appear not to receive the grace of God in truth, nor to be cordially disposed to the spirit of the gospel. So much apparent right intention and exemplary conduct seems, indeed, to demand respect; and a respect which some, who possess more zeal than judgment, do not duly pay them.

ARDELIO despises his neighbour EUSEBIUS's religious views and habits; and not only deems him a blind Pharisee, but has sometimes expressed the sentiment in the rudest terms. This reminds me of the old story of Diogenes' walking on the costly carpet of his brother philosopher, saying, "I trample on the pride of Plato." "Yes," said Plato, "but with greater pride, Diogenes."

If it be asked, Why should any one judge unfavourably of such a character as Eusebius? I answer, we may charitably seek to convince one whom we have reason to think under fatal mistakes, without any disposition to judge or condemn him. I meet a traveller who is confidently pursuing a path, which I have reason to believe is both wide of his mark, and dangerous to his person: I may charitably attempt to direct his steps, without thinking ill of his intention. It is recorded of our Lord, that he even loved a young man, who went away sorrowful on having his grand idol exposed. But why, it is asked, should you suspect any thing essentially wrong in such characters as you describe? I reply, for the following reasons:—

I have observed with much concern, when God hath wrought such a mighty operation of grace in the heart of a man, like Newton, that this man has not, upon such a saving change being wrought, suited the religious taste of the persons just mentioned. They will, indeed, commend his external change of conduct; but by no means relish his broken and contrite spirit, or his ascribing the change to free and unmerited favour, and his "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," as that Lord who has thus called him "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." They will not relish the zeal and evangelical strain of his preaching, his endeavouring to alarm a stupid sleeping conscience, to probe a deceitful heart, to expose the wretchedness of the world, and to rend the veil from formality and hypocrisy; nay, they will rather prefer some dry moralist, or mere formalist, who, instead of having experienced any such change of heart, will rather revile it.

Again, I have observed a lamentable disposition of mind in such persons to form false and unfavourable associations. They will pay too much attention to injurious representations, true or false, of a re-

ligious class of mankind, whom the world has branded with some general term of reproach. Two or three ignorant or extravagant fanatics shall be admitted to represent the religious world at large, not considering how much such offensive characters are actually grieving those whose cause I am pleading. No one, indeed, can have lived long in society, but he must needs have met the counterfeit of every excellence. In the article of property, for instance, who is not on the watch lest he should be imposed on? And, while the love of property is so general, who is not studious to discover the difference between the true and the false? It will be so in religion, wherever there is the attention which its worth so imperiously demands. Love has a piercing eye, which will discover its object in a crowd. But, if there be this disposition to confound in the lump the precious with the vile, it is symptomatic of something morbid in the heart. We have reason to fear a latent aversion from vital and spiritual religion, notwithstanding all the allowance that can be made for the prevailing prejudices of their education and circumstances, in the persons offended. And here, also, we cannot but lament the effect of such a disposition in those perverse conclusions these persons are often observed to draw from a sermon. Of the two handles which attach to every thing, what must we think of that mind which is ever choosing the wrong? Jesus Christ, for instance, shows how much the farm, the oxen, and the wife became impediments in the way of those who refused his invitation. But a perverse conclusion would infer that he was, therefore, an enemy to lawful engagements. Candour, however, sees at a glance, that this was not his design in speaking the parable. His drift was evidently to mark the state and spirit of the recusants, and not to discountenance their lawful occupations. He meant to show, that even lawful pursuits may be unlawfully pursued, when they become sole objects, and are thus preferred to his inestimable proposal. It is thus the well-disposed hearer will mark the design of his minister, and draw wholesome nourishment from that discourse, which another will turn to poison, by stopping to cavil at the letter.

Another objection arises from the affinity which characters of this class have with a "world which lieth in wickedness." In this instance of their worldly attachments, their charity will readily "cover a multitude of sins," and form excuses for serious breaches of both tables of the law, in their worldly friends. They appear in their element while in the society of these friends, especially if wealthy and accomplished. If any person's ear is wounded with a profane expression from one of their rich or fashionable aquaintance, they are ready to whisper, that, "notwithstanding his unguarded language, he has yet upon the whole one of the best of hearts."

Yet an infallible monitor has said, "Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" If the old maxim does not always hold good, that, "A man is known by the company he keeps," it will infallibly stand good if we add one word to it, namely, "that a man is known by the company he chooses to keep." The physician may be detained in an infectious chamber, and the lawyer be found convers

ing with his client in a shower of rain; but nobody will infer from thence, that the one chooses to breathe foul air, or that the other chooses to be wet to the skin. While the true Christian, therefore, will avoid inurbanity, fanaticism, or becoming the dupe of any religious party, he will also join the Psalmist in declaring, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

Again, these moral and religious characters, whom I am labouring to convince of their errors, have been observed to be more disposed to nurse, than to examine their prejudices against a minister of Mr N.'s principles. "His teaching," say they, "tends to divide a parish, or a family." But why do they not examine the reason? Why do they not consider, that introducing good has ever been the occasion of disturbing evil? I recollect a great family, whose servants were in a ferment, because one truly conscientious man was found among them. "He will spoil the place," was their term, because he would not connive at their iniquity. But let me ask, what was to be blamed in this affair? His integrity or their corruption? The master understood the case, and valued his servant in proportion as he marked the division. And thus it is in religion, while moving in a blind and corrupt world. Christ, though the Prince of Peace, expressly declared, that his doctrine would be the occasion of much division in the world; that "he came not to send peace, but a sword;" that he should be the occasion of family variance, &c. Matt. x. 34, 35; and warns his disciples of what they must expect while they endeavour faithfully to conduct his interests. Plain matter of fact declares, that to maintain truth has been the occasion of the suffering state of the true church in all ages, and that often unto the death of its innumerable martyrs. But, should a man who reads his Bible, or has any regard for the interests of truth, need to have this explained?

Another mistake might be exposed in the stale objection, that such principles as Mr N.'s tend to injure the interests of morality, from his strictly adhering to the doctrine of our eleventh article, on justification by faith. I would hope that this objection, in many, arises from a very slight acquaintance with the subject. It requires, indeed, but little attention to mark how expressly the Scriptures maintain our justification on the sole merit of our Redeemer, while they as fully maintain the necessity of our sanctification, or holiness, by his Spirit. It has been proved over and over, by sound and incontestible arguments, that these two grand fundamentals of our religion are so far from opposing each other, either in Scripture or experience, that, when real, they are found inseparable. But, because this is not the place to either state or defend this doctrine at large, it may help such as have hitherto stumbled respecting it, to observe an illustration and proof of this position, in the matter of fact just now presented to our view.

To one willing to learn, I would say, what proof would you require of the practical tendency of principles like Mr N.'s? We bring you, in his history, a most deplorable instance of human depravity and deep moral disorder. What experiment shall be tried to recover this wretched creature to God and to himself? Regard, I say, the fact in this

man's history. You will find, that his recovery was not brought about by such considerations as are urged in what are termed moral or rational discourses; but, on the contrary, by such truths as he laboured throughout his ministry to establish, not only from the Scriptures, but from his own experience of their efficacy. He dwelt on truths, which are essential and peculiar to Christianity; such as the guilt and utter depravity of our fallen nature, whereby man is become an alien and apostate from his God; his inability to recover himself without the grace of the Holy Spirit; the necessity of regeneration by the same Spirit, and of faith in the Redeemer, not only as the only ground of his justification before God, but as the root and motive of all acceptable obedience and good works. "If I wanted a man to fly," said Mr N., "I must contrive to find him wings; and thus, if I would successfully enforce moral duties, I must advance evangelical motives." He preached truths like these constantly and fervently, and he lived a consistent example of them.

Thus in all things approving himself a true disciple and minister of Christ, those who knew him, know, without making any odious comparison, it might be literally affirmed of Mr N., that "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," his mouth was opened and his heart enlarged towards men.

. I trust it is from a pure motive that I am endeavouring to convince persons of the class I am addressing of their mistake. And I am the more induced to bring a case in point before them, because I think it cannot be paralleled as an instance of the power of religion among those who labour to keep up prejudices against ministers of Mr N.'s character; or who, by unfair or partial statements, strive to subvert the doctrines he preached, and the great end to which all his labours were directed, namely, the life of God in the soul of man.

If indeed any one "is willing to be deceived, let him be deceived." At least such an one will not be addressed here. But if a man has any serious sense of the value of his soul—of its lost condition by sin, and of recovering the friendship of his God—if he feel the express declaration in the Scriptures of an eternity of happiness or misery to be of infinite importance, and to which the weightiest concern in this perishing world is but as the "dust on the balance"—let such an one consider these things. Let him inquire, whether those who object to the character and views of such a minister as Mr N. labour first to probe the state of their own hearts deeply, as he did? When he was no longer an infidel, had renounced his grosser habits, and was to all appearance a new man; "Yet," says he, "though I cannot doubt that this change, so far as it prevailed, was wrought by the Spirit and power of God, still I was greatly deficient in many respects. I was in some degree affected with a sense of my more enormous sins, but I was little aware of the innate evils of my heart. I had no apprehension of the spirituality and extent of the law of God. The hidden life of a Christian, as it consists in communion with God by Jesus Christ, and a con-

tinual dependence upon him for hourly supplies of wisdom, strength, and comfort, was a mystery of which I had as yet no knowledge. I acknowledged the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was past, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come."

Let the honest inquirer also consider, whether the objectors just spoken of are observed to be as anxious in their pursuits to serve God and propagate his will, to glorify his Son, and to save the souls of men? Whether they have experienced the force of truth in the conversion of their own hearts and lives? "Conformed to the world," as he once was, have they been since "transformed by the renewing of their minds," as he at length became? A few such questions as these, well considered, would lead to important discoveries. Such an inquiry would show, that, however some persons may be able to treat of the outworks of revelation, as they may of any other science they have studied; yet for such to dogmatize on religion, as it consists in a vital, spiritual, and experimental principle, would be as absurd as for a man originally deprived of one of the five senses, to deny the perceptions of those who possess them all. In short, it is as ridiculous as it is profane, for men rashly to assert on religious points, who evidently appear to have nothing so little at heart as the real influence and actual interests of religion.

Lastly, let nominal Christians seriously consider whether our immortal interests are not much too important to be staked upon a mere prejudice of education—an old unrevised habit of thinking—a taking it for granted that they are right, when the event may awfully prove the reverse; and that too, when such errors can never be rectified? The persons with whom I have been pleading would pity the Jew or the Pagan in such an error: I earnestly pray that they may be enabled to see as clearly their own mistake, and not resent the admonition of a real friend now seeking to prevent it.

III. But there yet remains a class of persons, found in the religious world, who entertain a high regard for Mr N.'s character, and who should gather that instruction from it of which they appear to stand in great need. "They should all take care," as he expresses it, "that they do not make their profession of religion a receipt in full for all other obligations." I do not regard this class as hypocrites, so much as self-deceivers. They have a zeal for the gospel; but without a comprehensive view of its nature. They do not consider, that, in avoiding error on the one hand, they are plunging into a contrary mistake. Like a child crossing a bridge, they tremblingly avoid the deep water which they perceive is roaring on one side; and recede from it till they are ready to perish, from not perceiving the danger of that which lies on the other side.

The class of which I am here speaking are defective in the grand article of a humble and contrite spirit. I remember Mr N. used to remark, that "if any one criterion could be given of a real work of grace begun in the heart of a sinner, it would be found in his contrite spirit.' Nothing is more insisted on in Scripture, as essential to real religion

I never knew any truly serious Christian but would readily join in acknowledging, that "the religion of a sinner," as Mr N. expresses it, "stands on two pillars; namely, what Christ did for us in his flesh, and what he performs in us by his Spirit. Most errors," says he, "arise from an attempt to separate these two." But as it was in the beginning, so it is now; the enemy comes and sows tares among the wheat; and a sort of loose profession has obtained, which has brought much reproach on religion, and become a cause of stumbling to many, who perceive a class of Christians contending for only a part of Christianity.

You can prevail little with a professor of this description, in exhorting him by "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," to self-denying, patient, or forbearing habits. If you state the genius of Christ's religion as it relates to the returning good for evil; in blessing them that curse, and praying for such as revile and persecute; in showing, out of a good conversation, their works with meekness of wisdom; or in having a fervent charity towards all men, &c. he is ready to kindle, and to cover his conduct by a crude system of mere doctrinal points, ill understood. It is well if your charitable remonstrance does not lead him to ask, Whether you mean to bring him back to the Whole Duty of Man, or to Nelson's Festivals and Fasts? He laments that you yourself are not clear in the gospel, because you maintain the whole of it; and that you are not faithful, if you maintain the whole of it in a patient, forbearing spirit.

The views of such persons, and the evil tempers to which they give place in their spiritual warfare, have often reminded me of the shrewd answer which our Richard I. sent the Pope; who was angry because a certain warlike bishop had fallen by Richard in battle, and whom, being an ecclesiastic, the Pope called his son. Richard sent the bishop's armour to the Pope, with the words of Joseph's brethren, "Know now, whether this be thy son's coat or not."

Nothing, however, could be more opposed to the spirit and character of our departed friend than the temper that has just been described. His zeal in propagating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, was not more conspicuous than the tenderness of his spirit as to the manner of his maintaining and delivering it. He was found constantly "speaking the truth in love, and in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure would give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth." There was a gentleness, a candour, and a forbearance in him, that I do not recollect to have seen in an equal degree among his brethren; and which had so conciliating an effect, that even the enemies of truth often spoke loudly in praise of his character. On the other hand, it generated such an affection in his friends, that, had he attempted to preach longer than he did, a great part of his congregation would have gathered, were it only for the pleasure they had in seeing his person.

That this account is not panegyric, is clear to all who personally knew Mr N. But as many who may read these Memoirs had not that

pleasure, I will add the testimony of one, whose nice discernment of character will admit of no question:—

"A people will love a minister, if a minister seems to love his people; the old maxim, *simile agit in simile*, is in no case more exactly verified; therefore you were beloved at Olney; and, if you preached to the Chickesaws and Chactaws, would be equally beloved by them."*

As this spirit of Christian benevolence and charity seems not to have been sufficiently cultivated among us, while a furious and often abusive zeal for certain points, as Cowper remarks, has been substituted for the whole truth, I am led to dwell longer than I intended in enforcing this amiable feature of Mr N.'s character; especially on account of those Christians, who have imbibed a false taste in their religion, from such teachers, or books, as have fallen in their way. I therefore earnestly request those persons to weigh well the inquiries which follow:—

Have you ever sufficiently considered the evil of divisions and heart-burnings in a church; and what interest that enemy, who comes to sow tares among the wheat, takes in promoting them? Do you reflect, that another Christian may be doing God's work, though his mode of doing it may not meet your taste, any more than your taste meets his? Do you consider how much greater evil a wrong spirit and temper produce than the things you object against? Do you weigh the consequences of your haste in weakening the hands and grieving the heart of any godly minister, whom you constantly or occasionally attend and in actually laying a stumbling-block in the way of the ungodly, while you depreciate him and his services? Nothing affected that eminent character, Mr Cadogan, like what he met from some religious persons of this kind, as I have related from his own lips, in his Memoirs.†

Let me farther exhort such as are in danger from this unchastised spirit to consider, how much corrupt nature is at the bottom of this error. Corrupt nature frets and rages at any supposed contradiction or restraint; it would substitute the work of the tongue for that of the heart: in the mean time, real religion is scorned by the world, which cannot distinguish between a thing so deformed, and the thing as it ought to appear.

Consider, also, whether there needs any grace at all in order to maintain such a sort of profession. We require only to christen the evil passions of corrupt nature, and then may call names, hate, boast, and give ourselves the preference, as much as any ungodly man whatever! A zealot at an election can fight and strive for his favourite candidate; with inflamed zeal he can cause divisions, exhibit pride, self-will, and impatience of subordination: but, let me ask, will the same evil tempers change their nature because they are employed about spiritual objects?

Much blame attaches, too, respecting certain disputable points for which such persons strive. It seems as if some, who are otherwise good men, did not relish the Bible till they had garbled and selected

* Hayley's Life of Cowper. Letter xxvii.

† See Memoirs of Cadogan, p 39.

it; and that, if the whole were not of acknowledged authority, they would condemn it as it now stands. They speak as if it were not accurate in its terms, or sufficiently express or decisive in confirming their fond opinions. This leads them to be shy of some parts of revelation, and to distort others, in order to fit them for their system; and while contending for that system, they appear to forget the stress which the apostle lays upon the holy, humble, self-denying, affectionate spirit of Christianity, in 1 Cor. xiii; how gentle it is, how easy to be entreated, how it hopeth and endureth all things, &c. While, on the contrary, they who can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, who have all knowledge, who can work miracles, and even die martyrs, would, without this distinguishing characteristic of Christianity, be considered of God as nothing. The Old Testament dispensation, it is granted, had a severe aspect, and special occasions may be pleaded for special expressions of holy indignation under any dispensation; but when the prophet describes the brighter day, he foretels, that then "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb," &c., as emblematical of the prevalence of that grace described by the apostle, in the chapter just quoted. Hold, therefore, the faith once delivered to the saints as firmly as possible, but hold it in love. "Buy the truth and sell it not;" rather die for it, than part with it; but "speak it in love;" and walk in it "as Christ also walked," ever remembering, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

I feel conscious that it is simply with a view to convince many well-meaning Christians of their error (and I have found more or less of this class in almost every place where I have been), that I thus speak. If a gross superstition, arising in the church, perverted the Christianity of former ages; I wish I may mistake in supposing, that a loose and unscriptural profession is widely spreading as the bane of our age. Against such a departure from the true genius of Christianity, I certainly, as a minister of Christ, ought to bear my feeble testimony. Consider, therefore, that what is said is with a single view to your best interests; and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

As I referred the Christians who were last addressed, to the character of Mr N. as an example, so I never knew a more perfect one to my purpose. When any person depreciated the ministry of a good man, who, by advancing important truths, was opposing the reigning errors of the times; but who, from timidity or prejudice, was shy of Mr N., he would imitate his Divine Master by saying, "Let him alone; he that is not against us is on our side. Make no man an offender for a word. He is doing good, according to his views. Let us pray for him, and by no means weaken his hands. Who knows but God may one day put him far above our heads, both in knowledge and usefulness?"

His grand point, in a few words, as he used to express it, was, "TO BREAK A HARD HEART, AND TO HEAL A BROKEN HEART." To implant the life of God in the soul of man, he would sacrifice every subordinate consideration. He felt every other consideration comparatively insignificant. He saw the spirit of ancient Pharisaism working among

those who cry out the most against it; who exact to a scruple, in the tythe of mint, anise, and cummin of their own peculiarities, while they pass over the weightier matters of unity and love; straining at the gnat of a private opinion, and swallowing the camel of a deadly discord. On the contrary, as far as order and circumstances would admit, Mr N. clave to every good man, and endeavoured to strengthen his hands, in whatever denomination of Christians he was found. His character well illustrated the Scripture, that though "scarcely for a righteous (or just) man would one die, yet for a good man (i. e. one eminent for his candour and benevolence) some would even dare to die." However they admired some ministers, they all loved him; and saw exemplified in him that "wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

I conclude these Memoirs with a word to such as are endeavouring to follow the steps of their late faithful friend, as he followed Christ. We cannot but lament the errors just described. We cannot, if we have any zeal for the gospel, but protest against them. But let us recollect, that they are not the only errors, which are found in the church; and therefore let us watch, lest any other "root of bitterness spring up to trouble us, and defile many." While you lament with me the removal of ministers like Mr N., let us recollect that Eternal Friend, who will never leave his church without witnesses to the truth; and who, among other reasons for removing earthly helps, teaches us thereby to rest only upon that help which cannot be removed. Let us take comfort too in recollecting, that, spotted as the church may appear from the inconsistencies of many of its members, yet all the real good that is to be found in this corrupt world, is to be found in that church. God saw seven thousand true believers in Israel while his prophet could see but one. Where some Jehu is sounding a trumpet before him, many are quietly passing to heaven without any such clamour. As a great writer remarks, "Because half a dozen grass hoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, while thousands of great cattle chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those, who make the noise, are 'the only inhabitants of the field.'"

But I must remark, that nothing has been more profitable to myself in considering Mr N.'s life, than the exhibition it makes of a particular providence. If the church be not conducted by such visible signs now, as formerly, it is found to be as actually conducted. We read of a Divine hand concerned in the fall of sparrows, in numbering the hairs of our head, and in raising our dust to life; but with what little interest we read this, appears by our distrust in the first trial we meet. If we do not dare to join the sentiments of some, who regard such expressions as purely figurative and hyperbolical, yet our imagination is so overwhelmed with the difficulty of the performance, that we are apt to turn from the subject with some general hope, but with a very indistinct and vague idea of "a God at hand," faithful to his promise, and almighty to deliver. Yet how many cases occur in the history of eve-

ly one of us, where nothing short of an Almighty arm could prove "a present help in the time of trouble."

Now, this short history before us is admirably calculated to encourage our faith and hope, when we are called to pass through those deep waters, that seem to bid defiance to human strength and contrivance. What, for instance, but a Divine interference caused Mr N. to be roused from sleep on board the Harwich at the moment of exchanging men, and thereby effected his removal? What placed him in a situation so remarkably suited to his recovering the ship, which had already passed the place of his station in Africa, and brought him back to his country? What kept him from returning in the boat, that was lost at Rio Cestors? or from the ship that was blown up near Liverpool? not to mention many other of his special deliverances.

"I am a wonder unto many," says he, in the motto of his Narrative; and if we as distinctly considered the strange methods of mercy which have occurred in our own cases, we should at least be a wonder to ourselves. But my aim is to point out the use we should make of these Memoirs in this respect. We should, as Christians, mark the error of despair. We should see, that the case of a praying man cannot be desperate; that if a man be out of the pit of hell, he is on the ground of mercy. We should recollect, that God sees a way of escape when we see none; that nothing is too hard for him; that he warrants our dependence, and invites us to call on him in the day of trouble, and gives a promise of deliverance. We should, therefore, in every trial, adopt the language of Mr N.'s favourite Herbert:

"Away, despair; my gracious Lord doth hear;
Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it; he doth steer,
Ev'n when the boat seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of his art:
Well may he close his eyes, but not his heart."

From these facts we should see, that Christ is able, not only "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" but also that he is able to bring the most hardened blasphemer and abject slave from his chains of sin and misery, to stand in the most honourable and useful station, and proclaim to the wretched and to the ruined the exceeding riches of his grace. I have observed, from my own experience as well as from that of others, how strong a hold Satan builds by despair. The pressing fascinations of the world, the secret invitations of sensuality, and the distant prospect of eternal things, form a powerful current against vital religion. The heart of a Christian is ready to sink whenever these proud waters rise. Let him, therefore, recollect, that his hope, his only hope, is in pressing right onward through a world of lies and vanity; that his present dispensation is the walk of faith and not of sight; and that "by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, he has given strong consolation to such as flee for refuge to the hope set before them."

One could, indeed, scarcely conjecture, that cases like Mr N.'s should be so perverted by any of our children, as that they should take

confidence in their sins from his former course of life, but, because such facts, as I am credibly informed, do exist, let us be upon the watch to counteract this deep device of the great enemy.

My dear young friends, who may have read these Memoirs, perhaps merely for your amusement, consider with what a contrary design St Paul states his former unrenewed condition: "I was," says he, "before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but for this cause I obtained mercy." For what cause? Was it that men should continue in sin, because a miracle of special grace had been wrought? To "do evil that good may come" is the black mark of a reprobate mind. But "for this cause," saith the apostle, "I obtained mercy; that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting." The same caution is necessary whenever you may be tempted to hope for such a recovery as Mr N.'s, after erring like him. To proceed upon such a hope, is a gross presumption. Thousands perish in wrong courses, for one who escapes from their natural consequences. Pray, therefore, that you may be enabled to resist the temptation of perverting such extraordinary cases. God affords them to be "a savour of life unto life," while Satan would employ them to be "a savour of death unto death." One almighty to save affords you here, indeed, an instance of special mercy, which gives you the strongest encouragement in setting your faces towards his kingdom; and this is the proper use to be made of such a case.

Your parents, your most disinterested friends, are anxiously watching for your good: and they, perhaps, have put this book into your hand with a view of promoting it. The author has cause to thank God, who put it into the heart of his pious parent to make a similar attempt, and bless it with success; and he could tell of more such instances. May it please God that you may be added to the number! Worldly prosperity would rather hurt than help you before your minds become rightly directed. Mr N. shows us,* that his firmest friend could not have served him effectually had not God first prepared his mind for the advancement. An enemy would occupy your minds with perishing objects; but God calls you to cultivate nobler views. He proposes glory, honour immortality, and eternal life by the gospel. "Seek," therefore, "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you."

* Memoirs, page 26

THE END OF THE MEMOIRS.

AN

AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &c.

LETTER I.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I MAKE no doubt but you have at times had pleasing reflections upon that promise made to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 2. They were then in the wilderness, surrounded with difficulties, which were greatly aggravated by their own distrust and perverseness: they had experienced a variety of dispensations, the design of which they could not as yet understand; they frequently lost sight of God's gracious purposes in their favour, and were much discouraged by reason of the way. To compose and animate their minds, Moses here suggests to them, that there was a future happy time drawing near, when their journey and warfare should be finished; that they should soon be put in possession of the promised land, and have rest from all their fears and troubles; and then it would give them pleasure to look back upon what they now found so uneasy to bear:—"Thou shalt remember all the way, by which the Lord thy God led thee through this wilderness."

But the importance and comfort of these words is still greater, if we consider them in a spiritual sense, as addressed to all who are passing through the wilderness of this world to a heavenly Canaan; who by faith in the promises and power of God are seeking eternal rest in that kingdom which cannot be shaken. The hope of that glorious inheritance inspires us with some degree of courage and zeal to press forward, to where Jesus has already entered as our forerunner; and when our eye is fixed upon him, we are more than conquerors over all that would withstand our progress. But we have not yet attained it; we still feel the infirmities of a fallen nature: through the remains of ignorance and unbelief, we often mistake the Lord's dealings with us, and are ready to complain, when, if we knew all, we should rather rejoice. But to us likewise there is a time coming, when our warfare shall be accomplished, our views enlarged, and our light increased: then, with what transports of adoration and love shall we look back upon the way, by which the Lord led us! We shall then see and acknowledge, that mercy and goodness directed every step; we shall see, that what our ignorance once called adversities and evils, were in reality blessings which we could not have done well without: that nothing befel us without a cause: that no trouble came upon us sooner, or pressed us more heavily, or continued longer, than our case required: in a word, that our many afflictions were each in their place among the means employed by divine grace and wisdom, to bring us to the possession of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which the Lord has prepared for his people. And even in this imperfect state, though we are seldom able to judge aright of our present circumstances, yet, if we look upon the years of our past life, and compare the dispensations we have been brought through, with the frame of our minds under each successive period; if we consider how wonderfully one thing has been connected with another; so that what we now number amongst our greatest advantages, perhaps, took their first rise from incidents which we thought hardly worth our notice; and that we have sometimes escaped the greatest dangers that threatened us, not by any wisdom or foresight of our own, but by the intervention of circumstances, which we neither de-

sired nor thought of;—I say, when we compare and consider these things by the light afforded us in the holy scriptures, we may collect indisputable proof, from the narrow circle of our own concerns, that the wise and good providence of God watches over his people from the earliest moment of their life, over-rules and guards them through all their wanderings in a state of ignorance, leads them in a way they know not, till at length his providence and grace concur in those events and impressions, which bring them to the knowledge of him and themselves.

I am persuaded that every believer will, upon due reflection, see enough in his own case to confirm this remark; but not all in the same degree. The outward circumstances of many have been uniform; they have known but little variety in life; and with respect to their inward change, it has been effected in a secret way, unnoticed by others, and almost unperceived by themselves. The Lord has spoken to them, not in thunder and tempest, but with a still small voice he has drawn them gradually to himself; so that, though they have a happy assurance of the thing, that they know and love him, and are passed from death unto life; yet of the precise time and manner, they can give little account. Others he seems to select, in order to shew the exceeding riches of his grace, and the greatness of his mighty power: he suffers the natural rebellion and wickedness of their hearts to have full scope; while sinners of less note are cut off with little warning, these are spared, though sinning with a high hand, and, as it were, studying their own destruction. At length, when all that knew them are perhaps expecting to hear, that they are made signal instances of divine vengeance, the Lord (whose thoughts are high above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth) is pleased to pluck them as brands out of the fire, and to make them monuments of his mercy, for the encouragement of others; they are, beyond expectation, convinced, pardoned, and changed. A case of this sort indicates a divine power no less than the creation of a world: it is evidently the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in the eyes of all those, who are not blinded by prejudice and unbelief.

Such was the persecuting Saul: his heart was full of enmity against Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore he persecuted and made havock of his disciples. He had been a terror to the church of Jerusalem, and was going to Damascus with the same views. He was yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against all that loved the Lord Jesus. He thought little of the mischief he had hitherto done. He was engaged for the suppression of the whole sect; and hurrying from house to house, from place to place, he carried menaces in his look, and repeated threatenings with every breath. Such was his spirit and temper, when the Lord Jesus, whom he hated and opposed, checked him in the height of his rage, called this bitter persecutor to the honour of an apostle, and inspired him with great zeal and earnestness, to preach that faith which he had so lately attempted to destroy.

Nor are we without remarkable displays of the same sovereign, efficacious grace in our own times;—I may particularly mention the instance of the late colonel Gardiner. If any real satisfaction could be found in a sinful course, he would have met with it; for he pursued the experiment with all possible advantages. He was habituated to evil; and many uncommon, almost miraculous deliverances, made no impression upon him. Yet he was likewise made willing in the day of God's power: and the bright example of his life, illustrated and diffused by the account of him, published since his death, has afforded an occasion of much praise to God, and much comfort to his people.

After the mention of such names, can you permit me, Sir, to add my own? If I do, it must be with a very humbling distinction. These once eminent sinners, proved sincere Christians: much had been forgiven them, therefore they loved much. St Paul could say, "The grace bestowed upon me was not in vain; for I laboured more abundantly than they all." Colonel Gardiner likewise was as a city set upon a hill, a burning and a shining light: the manner of his conversion was hardly more singular, than the whole course of his conversation from that time to his death. Here, alas! the parallel greatly fails. It has not been thus with me;—I must take deserved shame to myself, that I have made very unsuitable returns for what I have received. But, if the question is only concerning the patience and long-suffering of God, the wonderful interposition of his providence in favour of an unworthy sinner, the power of his grace in softening the hardest heart, and the riches of his mercy in pardoning the most enormous and aggravated transgressions; in these respects, I know no case more extraordinary than my own. And indeed many persons, to whom I have related my story, have thought it worthy of being preserved.

I never gave any succinct account in writing, of the Lord's dealing with me, till very lately; for I was deterred, on the one hand, by the great difficulty of writing properly where self is concerned; on the other, by the ill use which persons of corrupt and perverse minds are often known to make of such instances. The Psalmist reminds us that a reserve in these things is proper, when he says, "Come unto me, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul;" and our Lord cautions us not to "cast our pearls before swine." The pearls of a Christian are, perhaps, his choice experiences

of the Lord's power and love in the concerns of his soul; and these should not be at all adventures made public, lest we give occasion to earthly and grovelling souls, to profane what they cannot understand. These were the chief reasons of my backwardness; but, a few weeks since, I yielded to the judgment and request of a much respected friend, and sent him a relation at large, in a series of eight letters. The event has been, what I little expected; I wrote to one person, but my letters have fallen into many hands: amongst others, I find they have reached your notice; and instead of blaming me for being too tedious and circumstantial, which was the fault I feared I had committed, you are pleased to desire a still more distinct detail. As you and others of my friends apprehend my compliance with this request may be attended with some good effect, may promote the pleasing work of praise to our adorable Redeemer, to confirm the faith of some or other of his people, I am willing to obey; I give up my own reasonings upon the inexpediency of so inconsiderable a person as myself adventuring in so public a point of view. If God may be glorified on my behalf, and his children in any measure comforted or instructed by what I have to declare of his goodness, I shall be satisfied; and am content to leave all other possible consequences of this undertaking in his hands, who does all things well.

I must again have recourse to my memory, as I retained no copies of the letters you saw. So far as I can recollect what I then wrote, I will relate, but shall not affect a needless variety of phrase and manner, merely because those have been already perused by many. I may, perhaps in some places, when repeating the same facts, express myself in nearly the same words; yet I propose, according to your desire, to make this relation more explicit and particular than the former, especially towards the close, which I wound up hastily, lest my friend should be wearied. I hope you will likewise excuse me, if I do not strictly confine myself to narration, but now and then intersperse such reflections as may offer, while I am writing: and though you have signified your intentions of communicating what I send you to others, I must not, on this account, affect a conciseness and correctness which is not my natural talent, lest the whole should appear dry and constrained. I shall therefore (if possible) think only of you, and write with that confidence and freedom which your friendship and candour deserve. This sheet may stand as a preface, and I purpose, as far as I can, to intermit many other engagements, until I have completed the task you have assigned me. In the mean time, I entreat the assistance of your prayers, that in this, and all my poor attempts, I may have a single eye to his glory, who was pleased to call me out of horrid darkness, into the marvellous light of his gospel.

I am, with sincere respect,
Dear Sir,
Your obliged and affectionate servant.

January 12, 1763.

LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

I CAN sometimes feel a pleasure in repeating the grateful acknowledgment of David, "O Lord, I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bands." The tender mercies of God towards me were manifest in the first moment of my life;—I was born as it were in his house, and dedicated to him in my infancy. My mother (as I have heard from many) was a pious experienced Christian; she was a dissenter, in communion with the late Dr. Jennings. I was her only child, and as she was of a weak constitution and a retired temper, almost her whole employment was the care of my education. I have some faint remembrance of her care and instructions. At a time when I could not be more than three years of age, she herself taught me English, and with so much success (as I had something of a forward turn), that when I was four years old I could read with propriety, in any common book that offered. She stored my memory, which was then very retentive, with many valuable pieces, chapters, and portions of scripture, catechisms, hymns, and poems. My temper, at that time, seemed quite suitable to her wishes: I had little inclination to the noisy sports of children, but was best pleased when in her company, and always as willing to learn as she was to teach me. How far the best education may fall short of reaching the heart, will strongly appear in the sequel of my history; yet, I think, for the encouragement of pious parents to go on in the good way of doing their part faithfully to form their children's minds, I may properly propose myself as an instance. Though in process of time, I sinned away all the advantages of these early impressions, yet they were for a great while a restraint upon me; they returned again and again, and it was very long before I could wholly shake them off; and when the Lord at length opened my eyes, I found a great benefit from the recollection of them. Further, my dear mother, besides the pains she took with me, often commended me with many prayers and tears to God; and I doubt not but I reap the fruits of these prayers to this hour.

My mother observed my early progress with peculiar pleasure, and intended from the first to bring me up with a view to the ministry, if the Lord should so incline my heart. In my

sixth year I began to learn Latin; but, before I had time to know much about it, the intended plan of my education was broke short.—The Lord's designs were far beyond the views of an earthly parent; he was pleased to reserve me for an unusual proof of his patience, providence, and grace, and therefore over-ruled the purpose of my friends, by depriving me of this excellent parent, when I was something under seven years old. I was born the 24th of July, 1725, and she died the 11th of that month, 1732.

My father was then at sea (he was a commander in the Mediterranean trade at that time): he came home the following year, and soon after married again. Thus I passed into different hands. I was well treated in all other respects; but the loss of my mother's instructions was not repaired. I was now permitted to mingle with careless and profane children, and soon began to learn their ways. Soon after my father's marriage, I was sent to a boarding school in Essex; where the imprudent severity of the master almost broke my spirit and relish for books. With him I forgot the first principles and rules of arithmetic, which my mother had taught me years before. I staid there two years; in the last of the two a new usher coming, who observed and studied my temper, I took to the Latin with great eagerness; so that before I was ten years old, I reached and maintained the first post in the second class, which in that school read Tully and Virgil. I believe I was pushed forward too fast, and therefore not being grounded, I soon lost all I had learned (for I left school in my tenth year), and when I long afterwards undertook the Latin language from books, I think I had little, if any advantage, from what I had learned before.

My father's second marriage was from a family in Essex; and when I was eleven years old, he took me with him to sea. He was a man of remarkable good sense, and great knowledge of the world; he took great care of my morals, but could not supply my mother's part. Having been educated himself in Spain, he always observed an air of distance and severity in his carriage, which overawed and discouraged my spirit. I was always in fear when before him, and therefore he had the less influence. From that time to the year 1742, I made several voyages, but with considerable intervals between, which were chiefly spent in the country, excepting a few months in my fifteenth year, when I was placed upon a very advantageous prospect at Alicant in Spain; but my unsettled behaviour and impatience of restraint rendered that design abortive.

In this period my temper and conduct were exceedingly various. At school, or soon after, I had little concern about religion, and easily received very ill impressions. But I was often disturbed with convictions; I was fond of reading from a child; among other books, Bennet's Christian Oratory often came in my way; and though I understood but little of it, the course of life therein recommended appeared very desirable, and I was inclined to attempt it. I began to pray, to read the scriptures, and to keep a sort of dairy; I was presently religious in my own eyes; but, alas! this seeming goodness had no solid foundation, but passed away like a morning cloud, or early dew. I was soon weary, gradually gave it up, and became worse than before: instead of prayer, I learned to curse and blaspheme, and was exceedingly wicked, when from under my parent's view. All this was before I was twelve years old. About that time I had a dangerous fall from a horse; I was thrown, I believe, within a few inches of a hedge-row newly cut down; I got no hurt; but could not avoid taking notice of a gracious providence in my deliverance; for had I fallen upon the stakes, I had inevitably been killed; my conscience suggested to me the dreadful consequences, if in such a state I had been summoned to appear before God. I presently broke off from my profane practices, and appeared quite altered; but was not long before I declined again. These struggles between sin and conscience were often repeated; but the consequence was, that every relapse sunk me into still greater depths of wickedness. I was once roused by the loss of an intimate companion. We had agreed to go on board a man-of-war (I think it was on a Sunday), but I providentially came too late; the boat was overset, and he and several others were drowned. I was invited to the funeral of my play-fellow, and was exceedingly affected, to think that by a delay of a few minutes (which had much displeased and angered me till I saw the event), my life had been preserved. However, this likewise was soon forgot. At another time, the perusal of the Family Instructor put me upon a partial and transient reformation. In brief, though I cannot distinctly relate particulars, I think, I took up and laid aside a religious profession three or four different times before I was sixteen years of age; but all this while my heart was insincere. I often saw a necessity of religion as a means of escaping hell; but I loved sin, and was unwilling to forsake it. Instances of this, I can remember, were frequent in the midst of all my forms; I was so strangely blind and stupid, that sometimes when I have been determined upon things, which I knew were sinful and contrary to my duty, I could not go on quietly, till I had first dispatched my ordinary task of prayer, in which I have grudged every moment of my time; and when this was finished, my conscience was in some measure pacified, and I could rush into folly with little remorse.

My last reform was the most remarkable both for degree and continuance. Of this period, at least of some part of it, I may say,

in the apostle's words, "After the strictest sect of our religion, I lived a pharisee." I did every thing that might be expected from a person entirely ignorant of God's righteousness, and desirous to establish his own. I spent the greatest part of every day in reading the scriptures, meditation, and prayer; I fasted often; I even abstained from all animal food for three months; I would hardly answer a question, for fear of speaking an idle word. I seemed to bemoan my former miscarriages very earnestly, sometimes with tears. In short, I became an ascetic, and endeavoured, so far as my situation would permit, to renounce society, that I might avoid temptation. I continued in this serious mood (I cannot give it a higher title) for more than two years, without any considerable breaking off. But it was a poor religion; it left me in many respects under the power of sin, and so far as it prevailed, only tended to make me gloomy, stupid, unsociable, and useless.

Such was the frame of my mind, when I became acquainted with Lord Shaftesbury. I saw the second volume of his Characteristics in a petty shop at Middleburgh in Holland. The title allured me to buy it, and the style and manner gave me great pleasure in reading, especially the second piece, which his lordship, with great propriety, has entitled, a Rhapsody. Nothing could be more suited to the romantic turn of my mind, than the address of this pompous declamation; of the design and tendency I was not aware; I thought the author a most religious person, and that I had only to follow him, and be happy. Thus, with fine words and fair speeches, my simple heart was beguiled. This book was always in my hand; I read it, till I could very nearly repeat the Rhapsody verbatim from beginning to end. No immediate effect followed, but it operated like a slow poison, and prepared the way for all that followed.

This letter brings my history down to December, 1742. I was then lately returned from a voyage, and my father, not intending for the sea again, was thinking how to settle me in the world; but I had little life or spirit for business: I knew but little of men or things. I was fond of a visionary scheme of contemplative life; a medley of religion, philosophy, and indolence; and was quite averse to the thoughts of an industrious application to business. At length a merchant in Liverpool, an intimate friend of my father (to whom, as the instrument of God's goodness, I have since been chiefly indebted for all my earthly comforts), proposed to send me for some years to Jamaica, and to charge himself with the care of my future fortune. I consented to this, and every thing was prepared for my voyage. I was upon the point of setting out the following week. In the meantime, my father sent me on some business to a place a few miles beyond Maidstone in Kent; and this little journey, which was to have been only for three or four days, occasioned a sudden and remarkable turn, which roused me from the habitual indolence I had contracted, and gave rise to the series of uncommon dispensations, of which you desire a more particular account. So true it is, "that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

I am affectionately
Your's in the best bonds.

January 13, 1763.

LETTER III.

DEAR SIR,

A FEW days before my intended journey into Kent, I received an invitation to visit a family in that country. They were distant relations, but very intimate friends of my dear mother: she died in their house; but a coolness took place upon my father's second marriage, and I had heard nothing of them for many years. As my road lay within half a mile of their house, I obtained my father's leave to call on them. I was, however, very indifferent about it, and sometimes thought of passing on: however I went. I was known at first sight, before I could tell my name, and met with the kindest reception, as the child of a dear deceased friend. My friends had two daughters. The eldest (as I understood some years afterwards) had been often considered, by her mother and mine, as a future wife for me from the time of her birth. I know indeed, that intimate friends frequently amuse themselves with such distant prospects for their children, and that they miscarry much oftener than succeed. I do not say that my mother predicted what was to happen, yet there was something remarkable in the manner of its taking place. All intercourse between the families had been long broken off; I was going into a foreign country, and only called to pay a hasty visit; and this I should not have thought of, but for a message received just at that crisis (for I had not been invited at any time before). Thus the circumstances were precarious in the highest degree, and the event was as extraordinary. Almost at the first sight of this girl (for she was then under fourteen), I was impressed with an affection for her, which never abated or lost its influence a single moment in my heart from that hour. In degree, it actually equalled all that the writers of romance have imaged; in duration, it was unalterable. I soon lost all sense of religion, and became deaf to the remonstrances of conscience and prudence; but my regard for her was always the same; and I may perhaps venture to say, that none of the scenes of misery and wickedness I afterwards experienced, ever banished her a single hour together

from my waking thoughts, for the seven following years.

Give me leave, Sir, to reflect a little upon this unexpected incident, and to consider its influence upon my future life, and how far it was subservient to the views of divine providence concerning me, which seem to have been twofold; that by being given up, for a while, to the consequences of my own wilfulness, and afterwards reclaimed by a high hand, my case, so far as it should be known, might be both a warning and an encouragement to others.

In the first place, hardly any thing less than this violent and commanding passion would have been sufficient to awaken me from the dull melancholy habit I had contracted. I was almost a misanthrope, notwithstanding I so much admired the pictures of virtue and benevolence as drawn by lord Shaftesbury: but now my reluctance to active life was overpowered at once, and I was willing to be or to do any thing, which might subserve the accomplishment of my wishes at some future time.

Farther, when I afterwards made shipwreck of faith, hope, and conscience, my love to this person was the only remaining principle, which in any degree supplied their place; and the bare possibility of seeing her again was the only present and obvious means of restraining me from the most horrid designs against myself and others.

But then the ill effects it brought upon me counterbalanced these advantages. The interval, usually styled the time of courtship, is indeed a pleasing part of life, where there is a mutual affection, the consent of friends, a reasonable prospect as to settlement, and the whole is conducted in a prudential manner, and in subordination to the will and fear of God. When things are thus situated, it is a blessing to be susceptive of the tender passions; but when these concomitants are wanting, what we call love is the most tormenting passion in itself, and the most destructive in its consequences, that can be named: and they were all wanting in my case. I durst not mention it to her friends, or to my own, nor indeed for a considerable time to herself, as I could make no proposals: it remained as a dark fire, locked up in my own breast, which gave me a constant uneasiness. By introducing an idolatrous regard to a creature, it greatly weakened my sense of religion, and made farther way for the entrance of infidel principles: and though it seemed to promise great things, as an incentive to diligence and activity in life, in reality it performed nothing. I often formed mighty projects in my mind, of what I would willingly do or suffer, for the sake of her I loved; yet, while I could have her company, I was incapable of forcing myself away, to improve opportunities that offered: still less could it do in regulating my manners. It did not prevent me from engaging in a long train of excess and riot, utterly unworthy the honourable pretensions I had formed. And though through the wonderful interposition of divine goodness, the maze of my follies was at length unravelled, and my wishes crowned in such a manner as overpaid my sufferings; yet, I am sure, I would not go through the same series of trouble again, to possess all the treasures of both the Indies. I have enlarged more than I intended on this point, as perhaps these papers may be useful to caution others against indulging an ungovernable passion by my painful experience. How often may such headstrong votaries be said "to sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind."

My heart being now fixed and riveted to a particular object, I considered every thing I was concerned with in a new light. I concluded it would be absolutely impossible to live at such a distance as Jamaica, for a term of four or five years, and therefore determined at all events that I would not go. I could not bear either to acquaint my father with the true reason, or to invent a false one; therefore, without taking any notice to him why I did so, I staid three weeks instead of three days in Kent, till I thought (as it proved) the opportunity would be lost, and the ships sailed. I then returned to London. I had highly displeased my father by this disobedience; but he was more easily reconciled than I could have expected. In a little time I sailed with a friend of his to Venice. In this voyage, I was exposed to the company and ill example of the common sailors among whom I ranked. Importunity and opportunity presenting every day, I once more began to relax from the sobriety and order which I had observed, in some degree, for more than two years. I was sometimes pierced with sharp convictions; but though I made a few faint efforts to stop, as I had done from several before; I did not, indeed, as yet turn out profligate; but I was making large strides towards a total apostacy from God. The most remarkable check and alarm I received (and, for what I know, the last), was by a dream, which made a very strong, though not any abiding impression upon my mind.

The consideration of whom I am writing to renders it needless for me either to enter upon a discussion of the nature of dreams in general, or to make an apology for recording my own. Those who acknowledge scripture will allow that there have been monitory and supernatural dreams, evident communications from heaven, either directing or foretelling future events: and those who are acquainted with the history and experience of the people of God are well assured, that such intimations have not been totally withheld in any period down to the present times. Reason, far from contradicting this supposition, strongly pleads

for it, where the process of reasoning is rightly understood, and carefully pursued. So that a late eminent writer,* who, I presume, is not generally charged with enthusiasm, undertakes to prove, that the phenomenon of dreaming is inexplicable at least, if not absolutely impossible, without taking in the agency and intervention of spiritual beings, to us invisible. I would refer the incredulous to him. For my own part, I can say, without scruple, "The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." I am sure I dreamed to the following effect, and I cannot doubt, from what I have seen since, that it had a direct and easy application to my own circumstances, to the dangers, into which I was about to plunge myself, and to the unmerited deliverance and mercy which God would be pleased to offer me in the time of my distress.

Though I have wrote out a relation of this dream more than once for others, it has happened that I never reserved a copy; but the principal incidents are so deeply engraven in my memory, that I believe I am not liable to any considerable variations in repeating the account. The scene presented to my imagination was the harbour of Venice, where we had lately been. I thought it was night, and my watch upon the deck; and that, as I was walking to and fro by myself, a person came to me (I do not remember from whence), and brought me a ring, with an express charge to keep it carefully; assuring me that while I preserved that ring, I should be happy and successful: but, if I lost, or parted with it, I must expect nothing but trouble and misery. I accepted the present and the terms willingly, not in the least doubting my own care to preserve it, and highly satisfied to have my happiness in my own keeping. I was engaged in these thoughts, when a second person came to me, and observing the ring on my finger, took occasion to ask me some questions concerning it. I readily told him its virtues, and his answer expressed a surprise at my weakness, in expecting such effects from a ring. I think he reasoned with me some time upon the impossibility of the thing, and at length urged me in direct terms to throw it away. At first, I was shocked at the proposal; but his insinuations prevailed. I began to reason and doubt myself, and at last plucked it off my finger, and dropped it over the ship's side into the water, which it had no sooner touched, than I saw, the same instant, a terrible fire burst out from a range of mountains (a part of the Alps), which appeared at some distance behind the city of Venice. I saw the hills as distinct as if awake, and they were all in flames. I perceived too late my folly; and my tempter, with an air of insult, informed me, that all the mercy God had in reserve for me, was comprised in that ring, which I had wilfully thrown away. I understood that I must now go with him to the burning mountains, and that all the flames I saw were kindled upon my account. I trembled, and was in a great agony; so that it was surprising I did not then awake: but my dream continued, and when I thought myself upon the point of a constrained departure, and stood self-condemned, without plea or hope; suddenly, either a third person, or the same who brought the ring at first (I am not certain which), came to me, and demanded the cause of my grief. I told him the plain case, confessing that I had ruined myself wilfully, and deserved no pity. He blamed my rashness, and asked if I should be wiser, supposing I had my ring again. I could hardly answer to this; for I thought it was gone beyond recal. I believe, indeed, I had not time to answer, before I saw this unexpected friend go down under the water, just in the spot where I dropped it; and he soon returned, bringing the ring with him. The moment he came on board, the flames in the mountains were extinguished, and my seducer left me. Then was "the prey taken from the hand of the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered." My fears were at an end, and with joy and gratitude I approached my kind deliverer to receive the ring again, but he refused to return it, and spoke to this effect: "If you should be entrusted with this ring again, you would very soon bring yourself into the same distress; you are not able to keep it; but I will preserve it for you, and whenever it is needful, will produce it in your behalf."—Upon this I awoke, in a state of mind not to be described: I could hardly eat, or sleep, or transact my necessary business for two or three days; but the impression soon wore off, and in a little time I totally forgot it; and I think it hardly occurred to my mind again, till several years afterwards. It will appear, in the course of these papers, that a time came, when I found myself in circumstances very nearly resembling those suggested by this extraordinary dream, when I stood helpless and hopeless upon the brink of an awful eternity: and I doubt not, but had the eyes of my mind been then opened, I should have seen my grand enemy, who had seduced me, wilfully to renounce and cast away my religious profession, and to involve myself in the most complicated crimes; I say, I should probably have seen him pleased with my agonies, and waiting for a permission to seize and bear away my soul to this place of torment. I should perhaps have seen likewise that Jesus, whom I had persecuted and defied, rebuking the adversary, challenging me for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, and saying, "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." However, though I saw not these things, I

* Baxter on the Vis Inertiæ.

found the benefit; I obtained mercy. The Lord answered for me in the day of my distress; and, blessed be his name, he who restored the ring (or what was signified by it), vouchsafes to keep it. O what an unspeakable comfort is this, that I am not in mine own keeping. "The Lord is my shepherd:" I have been able to trust my all in his hands, and I know in whom I have believed. Satan still desires to have me, that he might sift me as wheat; but my Saviour has prayed for me, that my faith may not fail. Here is my security and power; a bulwark, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. But for this, many a time and often, if possible, I should have ruined myself, since my first deliverance; nay, I should fall, and stumble, and perish still, after all that the Lord has done for me, if his faithfulness was not engaged in my behalf, to be my sun and shield even unto death.—"Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Nothing very remarkable occured in the following part of that voyage. I returned home in December, 1743, and soon after repeated my visit to Kent, where I protracted my stay in the same imprudent manner I had done before, which again disappointed my father's designs in my favour, and almost provoked him to disown me. Before any thing suitable offered again I was impressed (owing entirely to my own thoughtless conduct which was all of a piece), and put on board a tender: it was a critical juncture, when the French fleets were hovering upon our coast, so that my father was incapable to procure my release. In a few days I was sent on board the Harwich man-of-war, at the Nore. I entered here upon quite a new scene of life, and endured much hardship for about a month. My father was then willing that I should remain in the navy, as a war was daily expected, and procured me a recommendation to the captain, who took me upon the quarter deck as a midshipman. I had now an easy life, as to externals, and might have gained respect; but my mind was unsettled, and my behaviour very indifferent. I here met with companions who completed the ruin of my principles; and though I affected to talk of virtue, and was not utterly abandoned as afterwards, yet my delight and habitual practice was wickedness; my chief intimate was a person of exceeding good natural talents, and much observation; he was the greatest master of what is called the free-thinking scheme, I remember to have met with, and knew how to insinuate his sentiments in the most plausible way. And his zeal was equal to his address; he could hardly have laboured more in the cause, if he had expected to gain heaven by it. Allow me to add, while I think of it, that this man, whom I honoured as my master, and whose practice I adopted so eagerly, perished in the same way as I expected to have done. I have been told, that he was overtaken in a voyage from Lisbon with a violent storm; the vessel and people escaped, but a great sea broke on board and swept him into eternity. Thus the Lord spares or punishes according to his sovereign pleasure! But to return:—I was fond of his company, and having myself a smattering of books, was eager enough to show my reading. He soon perceived my case that I had not wholly broke through the restraints of conscience, and therefore did not shock me at first with too broad intimations of his design; he rather, as I thought, spoke favourably of religion; but when he had gained my confidence he began to speak plainer; and perceiving my ignorant attachment to the Characteristics, he joined issue with me upon that book, and convinced me that I had never understood it. In a word, he so plied me with objections and arguments, that my depraved heart was soon gained, and I entered into his plan with all my spirit. Thus, like an unwary sailor, who quits his port just before a rising storm, I renounced the hopes and comforts of the gospel at the very time when every other comfort was about to fail me.

In December, 1744, the Harwich was in the Downs, bound to the East Indies. The captain gave me liberty to go on shore for a day; but, without consulting prudence, or regarding consequences, I took horse, and followed the dictates of my restless passion; I went to take a last leave of her I loved. I had little satisfaction in the interview, as I was sensible that I was taking pains to multiply my own troubles. The short time I could stay passed like a dream, and on new-year's day, 1745, I took my leave to return to the ship. The captain was prevailed on to excuse my absence; but this rash step (especially as it was not the first step of the kind I had taken) highly displeased him, and lost me his favour, which I never recovered.

At length we sailed from Spithead with a very large fleet. We put into Torbay with a change of wind; but it returning fair again, we sailed the next day. Several of our fleet were lost in attempting to leave that place; and the following night the whole fleet was greatly endangered upon the coast of Cornwall, by a storm from the southward. The darkness of the night, and the number of the vessels, occasioned much confusion and damage. Our ship, though several times in imminent danger of being run down by other vessels, escaped unhurt; but many suffered much, particularly the admiral. This occasioned our putting back to Plymouth.

While we lay at Plymouth, I heard that my father, who had interest in some of the ships lately lost, was come down to Torbay. He had a connection at that time with the African company. I thought if I could get to him, he might easily introduce me into that service, which would be better than pursuing a long

uncertain voyage to the East Indies. It was a maxim with me in those unhappy days, never to deliberate; the thought hardly occured to me before I was resolved to leave the ship at all events: I did so, and in the wrongest manner possible. I was sent one day in the boat, to take care that none of the people deserted; but I betrayed my trust, and went off myself. I knew not what road to take, and durst not ask for fear of being suspected; yet having some general idea of the country, I guessed right; and, when I had travelled some miles, I found upon inquiry, that I was on the road to Dartmouth. All went smoothly that day, and part of the next: I walked apace, and expected to have been with my father in about two hours, when I was met by a small party of soldiers; I could not avoid or deceive them. They brought me back to Plymouth: I walked through the streets guarded like a felon. My heart was full of indignation, shame, and fear. I was confined two days in the guard house, then sent on board my ship, and kept awhile in irons, then publicly stripped and whipped; after which I was degraded from my office, and all my former companions forbidden to show me the least favour, or even to speak to me. As midshipman, I had been entitled to some command, which (being sufficiently haughty and vain) I had not been backward to exert. I was now in my turn brought down to a level with the lowest, and exposed to the insults of all.

And as my present situation was uncomfortable, my future prospects were still worse; the evils I suffered were likely to grow heavier every day. While my catastrophe was recent, the officers and my quondam brethren were something disposed to screen me from ill usage; but, during the little time I remained with them afterwards, I found them cool very fast in their endeavours to protect me. Indeed they could not avoid it without running a great risk of sharing with me: for the captain, though in general a humane man, who behaved very well to the ship's company, was almost implacable in his resentment, when he had been greatly offended, and took several occasions to show himself so to me; and the voyage was expected to be, as it proved, for five years. Yet I think nothing I either felt or feared distressed me so much, as to see myself thus forcibly torn away from the object of my affections, under a great improbability of seeing her again, and a much greater of returning in such a manner as would give me hopes of seeing her mine. Thus I was as miserable on all hands as could well be imagined. My breast was filled with the most excruciating passions, eager desire, bitter rage, and black despair. Every hour exposed me to some new insult and hardship, with no hope of relief or mitigation, no friend to take my part, or to listen to my complaint. Whether I looked inward or outward, I could perceive nothing but darkness and misery. I think no case, except that of a conscience wounded by the wrath of God, could be more dreadful than mine. I cannot express with what wishfulness and regret I cast my last looks upon the English shore; I kept my eyes fixed upon it till, the ship's distance increasing, it sensibly disappeared; and when I could see it no longer, I was tempted to throw myself into the sea, which (according to the wicked system I had adopted) would put a period to all my sorrows at once. But the secret hand of God restrained me.—Help me to praise him, dear Sir, for his wonderful goodness to the most unworthy of all creatures.

I am,

Your most obliged servant.

January 15, 1763.

LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I desired your instructions as to the manner and extent of these memoirs, I began to write before I received them, and had almost finished the preceding sheet when your favour of the eleventh came to hand. I shall find another occasion to acknowledge my sense of your kind expressions of friendship, which, I pray the Lord, I may never give you cause to repent or withdraw; at present I shall confine myself to what more particularly relates to the task assigned me. I shall obey you, Sir, in taking notice of the little incidents you recal to my memory, and of others of the like nature, which, without your direction, I should have thought too trivial, and too much my own to deserve mentioning. When I began the eighth let er, I intended to say no more of myself than might be necessary to illustrate the wonders of divine providence and grace in the leading turns of my life; but I account your judgment a sufficient warrant for enlarging my plan.

Amongst other things, you desired a more explicit account of the state and progress of my courtship, as it is usually phrased. This was the point in which I thought it especially became me to be very brief; but I submit to you; and this seems a proper place to resume it, by telling you how it stood at the time of my leaving England.—When my inclinations first discovered themselves, both parties were so young, that no one but myself considered it in a serious view. It served for tea-table talk amongst our friends, and nothing further was expected from it. But afterwards, when my passion seemed to have abiding effects, so that in an interval of two years it was not at all abated, and especially as it occasioned me to act without any regard to prudence or interest, or my father's designs, and as these

was a coolness between him and the family, her parents began to consider it as a matter of consequence; and when I took my last leave of them, her mother (at the same time she expressed the most tender affection for me, as if I had been her own child) told me, that though she had no objections to make, upon a supposition that, at a maturer age, there should be a probability of our engaging upon a prudent prospect, yet, as things then stood, she thought herself obliged to interfere; and therefore desired I would no more think of returning to their house, unless her daughter was from home, till such time as I could either prevail with myself entirely to give up my pretensions, or could assure her that I had my father's express consent to go on. Much depended upon Mrs. N*****'s part in this affair; it was something difficult; but though she was young, gay, and quite unpractised in such matters, she was directed to a happy medium. A positive encouragement, or an absolute refusal, would have been attended with equal, though different disadvantages. But without much studying about it, I found her always upon her guard: she had penetration to see her absolute power over me, and prudence to make a proper use of it; she would neither understand my hints, nor give me room to come to a direct explanation. She has said since, that from the first discovery of my regard, and long before the thought was agreeable to her, she had often an unaccountable impression upon her mind, that sooner or later she should be mine. Upon these terms we parted.

I now return to my voyage. During our passage to Madeira, I was a prey to the most gloomy thoughts. Though I had well deserved all I met with, and the captain might have been justified if he had carried his resentment still farther; yet my pride at that time suggested that I had been grossly injured, and this so far wrought upon my wicked heart, that I actually formed designs against his life; and this was one reason that made me willing to prolong my own. I was sometimes divided between the two, not thinking it practicable to effect both. The Lord had now to appearance given me up to judicial blindness; I was capable of any thing. I had not the least fear of God before my eyes, nor (so far as I remember) the least sensibility of conscience. I was possessed of so strong a spirit of delusion, that I believed my own lie, and was firmly persuaded that after death I should cease to be: yet the Lord preserved me! Some intervals of sober reflection would at times take place: when I have chosen death rather than life, a ray of hope would come in (though there was little probability for such a hope) that I should yet see better days, that I might again return to England, and have my wishes crowned, if I did not wilfully throw myself away. In a word, my love to Mrs. N***** was now the only restraint I had left; though I neither feared God, nor regarded men, I could not bear that she should think meanly of me when I was dead. As in the outward concerns of life, the weakest means are often employed by divine providence to produce great effects, beyond their common influence (as when a disease, for instance, has been removed by a fright), so I found it then: this single thought, which had not restrained me from a thousand smaller evils, proved my only and effectual barrier against the greatest and most fatal temptations. How long I could have supported this conflict, or what, humanly speaking, would have been the consequence of my continuing in that situation, I cannot say; but the Lord, whom I little thought of, knew my danger, and was providing for my deliverance.

Two things I had determined when at Plymouth, that I would not go to India, and that I would go to Guinea; and such, indeed, was the Lord's will concerning me; but they were to be accomplished in his way, not in my own. We had been now at Madeira some time; the business of the fleet was completed, and we were to sail the following day. On that memorable morning I was late in bed, and had slept longer, but that one of the midshipmen (an old companion) came down, and, between jest and earnest, bade me rise; and as I did not immediately comply, he cut down the hammock or bed in which I lay, which forced me to dress myself. I was very angry, but durst not resent it. I was little aware how much his caprice affected me, and that this person, who had no design in what he did, was the messenger of God's providence. I said little, but went upon deck, where I that moment, saw a man putting his clothes into a boat, who told me he was going to leave us. Upon inquiring, I was informed that two men from a Guinea ship, which lay near us, had entered on board the Harwich, and that the commodore (the present Sir George Pocock) had ordered the captain to send two others in their room. My heart instantly burned like fire. I begged the boat might be detained a few minutes; I ran to the lieutenants, and intreated them to intercede with the captain that I might be dismissed. Upon this occasion, though I had been formerly on ill terms with these officers, and had disobliged them all in their turns, yet they had pitied my case, and were ready to serve me now. The captain, who, when we were at Plymouth, had refused to exchange me, though at the request of admiral Medley, was now easily prevailed on. I believe, in little more than half an hour from my being asleep in my bed, I saw myself discharged, and safe on board another ship. This was one of the many critical turns of my life, in which the Lord was pleased to display his providence

and care, by causing many unexpected circumstances to concur in almost an instant of time. These sudden opportunities were several times repeated: each of them brought me into an entire new scene of action; and they were usually delayed to almost the last moment, in which they could have taken place.

The ship I went on board of was bound to Sierra Leon, and the adjacent parts of what is called the Windward Coast of Africa. The commander I found, was acquainted with my father: he received me very kindly, and made fair professions of assistance, and I believe he would have been my friend; but without making the least advantage of former mistakes and troubles, I pursued the same course; nay, if possible, I acted much worse. On board the Harwich, though my principles were totally corrupted, yet, as upon my first going there I was in some degree staid and serious, the remembrance of this made me ashamed of breaking out in that notorious manner I could otherwise have indulged. But now, entering amongst strangers, I could appear without disguise; and I well remember, that while I was passing from the one ship to the other, this was one reason why I rejoiced in the exchange, and one reflection I made upon the occasion, viz. that I now might be as abandoned as I pleased, without any controul: and, from this time, I was exceedingly vile indeed, little if any thing short of that animated description of an almost irrecoverable state, which we have in 2 Peter ii. 14. I not only sinned with a high hand myself, but made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion: nay, I eagerly sought occasion sometimes to my own hazard and hurt. One natural consequence of this carriage was, a loss of the favour of my new captain; not that he was at all religious, or disliked my wickedness, any further than it affected his interest; but I became careless and disobedient: I did not please him, because I did not intend it; and, as he was a man of an odd temper likewise, we the more easily disagreed. Besides, I had a little of that unlucky wit, which can do little more than multiply troubles and enemies to its possessor; and upon some imagined affront, I made a song, in which I ridiculed his ship, his designs, and his person, and soon taught it to the whole ship's company. Such was the ungrateful return I made for his offers of friendship and protection. I had mentioned no names, but the allusion was plain, and he was no stranger either to the intention or the author.——I shall say no more of this part of my story; let it be buried in eternal silence. But let me not be silent from the praise of that grace which could pardon, that blood which could expiate such sins as mine; yea, "the Ethiopian may change his skin, and the leopard his spots," since I, who was the willing slave of every evil, possessed with a legion of unclean spirits, have been spared, and saved, and changed, to stand as a monument of his almighty power for ever.

Thus I went on for about six months, by which time the ship was preparing to leave the coast. A few days before she sailed the captain died. I was not upon much better terms with his mate, who now succeeded to the command, and had upon some occasion treated me ill: I made no doubt, but, if I went with him to the West Indies, he would put me on board a man-of-war; and this, from what I had known already, was more dreadful to me than death. To avoid it, I determined to remain in Africa, and amused myself with many golden dreams, that here I should find an opportunity of improving my fortune.

There are still upon that part of the coast a few white men settled (and there were many more at the time I was first there), whose business it was to purchase slaves, &c. in the rivers and country adjacent, and sell them to the ships at an advanced price. One of these, who at first landed in my indigent circumstances, had acquired considerable wealth: he had lately been in England, and was returning in the vessel I was in, of which he owned a quarter part. His example impressed me with hopes of the same success; and upon condition of entering into his service, I obtained my discharge. I had not the precaution to make any terms, but trusted to his generosity. I received no compensation for my time on board the ship, but a bill upon the owners in England, which was never paid; for they failed before my return. The day before the vessel sailed I landed upon the island of Benanoes, with little more than the clothes upon my back, as if I had escaped shipwreck.

I am, dear Sir,
Your's, &c.

January 17, 1763.

LETTER V.

DEAR SIR,

THERE seems an important instruction, and of frequent use, in these words of our dear Lord, "Mine hour is not yet come." The two following years, of which I am now to give some account, will seem as an absolute blank in a very short life: but as the Lord's hour of grace was not yet come, and I was to have still deeper experience of the dreadful state of the heart of man, when left to itself; I have seen frequent cause since, to admire the mercy of the Lord in banishing me to those distant parts, and almost excluding me from human society, at a time when I was big with mischief, and, like one infected with

a pestilence, was capable of spreading a taint wherever I went. Had my affairs taken a different turn; had I succeeded in my designs, and remained in England, my sad story would probably have been worse. Worse in myself, indeed, I could have hardly been; but my wickedness would have had greater scope; I might have been very hurtful to others, and multiplied irreparable evils, but the Lord wisely placed me where I could do little harm. The few I had to converse with were too much like myself, and I was soon brought into such abject circumstances, that I was too low to have any influence. I was rather shunned and despised than imitated; there being few even of the negroes themselves, during the first year of my residence amongst them, but thought themselves too good to speak to me. I was as yet an "outcast lying in my blood" (Ezek. xvi.), and to all appearance exposed to perish. But the Lord beheld me with mercy,—he did not strike me to hell, as I justly deserved; "he passed by me when I was in my blood, and said unto me live." But the appointed time for the manifestation of his love, to cover all my iniquities with the robe of his righteousness, and to admit me to the privileges of his children, was not till long afterwards; yet even now he bade me live; and I can only ascribe it to his secret upholding power, that what I suffered in a part of this interval, did not bereave me either of my life or senses; yet as by these sufferings the force of my evil example and inclinations was lessened, I have reason to account them amongst my mercies.

It may not, perhaps, be amiss to digress for a few lines, and give you a very brief sketch of the geography of the circuit I was now confined to, especially as I may have frequent occasion to refer to places I shall now mention; for my trade afterwards when the Lord gave me to see better days, was chiefly to the same places, and with the same persons, where and by whom I had been considered as upon a level with their meanest slaves. From Cape de Verd, the most western point of Africa, to Cape Mount, the whole coast is full of rivers: the principal are Gambia, Rio Grande, Sierra Leon, and Sherbro. Of the former, as it is well known, and I was never there, I need say nothing. The Rio Grande, like the Nile, divides into many branches near the sea. On the most northerly, called Cacheo, the Portuguese have a settlement. The most southern branch, known by the name of Rio Nuna, is, or then was, the usual boundary of the white men's trade northward. Sierra Leon is a mountainous peninsula, uninhabited, and I believe inaccessible, upon account of the thick woods, excepting those parts which lie near the water. The river is large and navigable. From hence, about twelve leagues to the south-east, are three contiguous islands, called the Benanoes, about twenty miles in circuit: this was about the centre of the white men's residence. Seven leagues farther the same way, lie the Plantanes, three small islands, two miles distant from the continent at the point which forms one side of the Sherbro. This river is more properly a sound, running within a long island, and receiving the confluence of several large rivers, "rivers unknown to song," but far more deeply engraven in my remembrance than the Po or Tyber. The southernmost of these has a very peculiar course, almost parallel to the coast; so that in tracing it a great many leagues upwards, it will seldom lead one above three miles, and sometimes not more than half a mile from the sea-shore. Indeed I know not, but that all these rivers may have communications with each other, and with the sea in many places, which I have not remarked. If you cast your eyes upon a large map of Africa, while you are reading this, you will have a general idea of the country I was in; for though the maps are very incorrect, most of the places I have mentioned are inserted, and in the same order as I have named them.

My new master had formerly resided near Cape Mount, but he now settled at the Plantanes, upon the largest of the three islands. It is a low sandy island, about two miles in circumference, and almost covered with palm-trees. We immediately began to build a house, and to enter upon trade. I had now some desire to retrieve my lost time, and to exert diligence in what was before me; and he was a man with whom I might have lived tolerably well, if he had not been soon influenced against me: but he was much under the direction of a black woman, who lived with him as a wife. She was a person of some consequence in her own country, and he owed his first rise to her interest. This woman (I know not for what reason) was strangely prejudiced against me from the first; and what made it still worse for me, was a severe fit of illness, which attacked me very soon, before I had opportunity to show what I could or would do in his service. I was sick when he sailed in a shallop to Rio Nuna, and he left me in her hands. At first I was taken some care of; but, as I did not recover very soon, she grew weary, and entirely neglected me. I had sometimes not a little difficulty to procure a draught of cold water, when burning with a fever. My bed was a mat, spread upon a board or chest, and a log of wood my pillow. When my fever left me, and my appetite returned, I would gladly have eaten, but there was no one gave unto me. She lived in plenty herself, but hardly allowed me sufficient to sustain life, except now and then, when in the highest good humour, she would send me victuals in her own plate, after she had dined; and this (so greatly was my pride humbled) I received with

thanks and eagerness, as the most needy begger does an alms. Once, I well remember, I was called to receive this bounty from her own hand; but, being exceedingly weak and feeble, I dropped the plate. Those who live in plenty can hardly conceive how this loss touched me; but she had the cruelty to laugh at my disappointment; and though the table was covered with dishes (for she lived much in the European manner), she refused to give me any more. My distress has been at times so great, as to compel me to go, by night, and pull up roots in the plantation (though at the risk of being punished as a thief), which I have eaten raw upon the spot, for fear of discovery. The roots I speak of are very wholesome food, when boiled or roasted, but as unfit to be eaten raw in any quantity, as a potatoe. The consequence of this diet, which, after the first experiment, I always expected, and seldom missed, was the same as if I had taken tartar emetic; so that I often returned as empty as I went: yet necessity urged me to repeat the trial several times. I have sometimes been relieved by strangers; nay, even by the slaves in the chain, who secretly brought me victuals (for they durst not be seen to do it) from their own slender pittance. Next to pressing want, nothing sits harder upon the mind than scorn and contempt: and of this likewise I had an abundant measure. When I was very slowly recovering, this woman would sometimes pay me a visit, not to pity or relieve, but to insult me. She would call me worthless and indolent, and compel me to walk, which when I could hardly do, she would set her attendants to mimic my motions, to clap their hands, laugh, throw limes at me; or, if they chose to throw stones (as I think was the case once or twice), they were not rebuked: but, in general, though all who depended on her favour must join in her treatment, yet, when she was out of sight, I was rather pitied than scorned, by the meanest of her slaves. At length my master returned from his voyage; I complained of ill usage, but he could not believe me; and, as I did it in her hearing, I fared no better for it. But in his second voyage he took me with him. We did pretty well for a while, till a brother trader he met in the river, persuaded him that I was unfaithful, and stole his goods in the night, or when he was on shore. This was almost the only vice I could not be justly charged with: the only remains of a good education I could boast of, was what is commonly called honesty: and, as far as he had entrusted me, I had always been true; and though my great distress might, in some measure, have excused it, I never once thought of defrauding him in the smallest matter. However, the charge was believed, and I condemned without evidence. From that time he likewise used me very hardly; whenever he left the vessel I was locked upon deck, with a pint of rice for my day's allowance; and if he staid longer, I had no relief till his return. Indeed, I believe I should have been nearly starved, but for an opportunity of catching fish sometimes. When fowls were killed for his own use, I seldom was allowed any part but the entrails, to bait my hooks with: and, at what we call *slack water*, that is, about the changing of the tides, when the current was still, I used generally to fish (for at other times it was not practicable), and I very often succeeded. If I saw a fish upon my hook, my joy was little less than any other person may have found, in the accomplishment of the scheme he had most at heart. Such a fish, hastily broiled, or rather half burned, without sauce, salt, or bread, has afforded me a delicious meal. If I caught none, I might, if I could, sleep away my hunger till the next return of slack water, and then try again. Nor did I suffer less from the inclemency of the weather and the want of clothes. The rainy season was now advancing; my whole suit was a shirt, a pair of trowsers, a cotton handkerchief instead of a cap, and a cotton cloth about two yards long, to supply the want of upper garments: and thus accoutred, I have been exposed for twenty, thirty, perhaps near forty hours together, in incessant rains, accompanied with strong gales of wind, without the least shelter, when my master was on shore. I feel to this day some faint returns of the violent pains I then contracted. The excessive cold and wet I endured in that voyage, and soon after I had recovered from a long sickness, quite broke my constitution and my spirits; the latter were soon restored, but the effects of the former still remain with me, as a needful memento of the service and the wages of sin.

In about two months we returned, and then the rest of the time I remained with him was chiefly spent at the Plantanes under the same regimen as I have already mentioned. My haughty heart was now brought down, not to a wholesome repentance, not to the language of the prodigal; this was far from me; but my spirits were sunk; I lost all resolution, and almost all reflection. I had lost the fierceness which fired me when on board the Harwich, and which made me capable of the most desperate attempts; but I was no further changed than a tyger tamed by hunger —remove the occasion and he will be as wild as ever.

One thing, though strange, is most true. Though destitute of food and clothing, depressed to a degree beyond common wretchedness, I could sometimes collect my mind to mathematical studies. I had bought Barrow's Euclid at Portsmouth; it was the only volume I brought on shore; it was always with me, and I used to take it to remote corners of the island by the sea side, and draw mi-

diagrams with a long stick upon the sand. Thus I often beguiled my sorrows, and almost forgot my feeling: and thus, without any other assistance, I made myself, in a good measure, master of the first six books of Euclid.

I am,

Your's as before.

January 17, 1763.

LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

THERE is much piety and spirit in the grateful acknowledgment of Jacob, "With my staff I passed this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." They are words which ought to affect me with a peculiar emotion. I remember that in some of those mournful days, to which my last letter refers, I was busied in planting some lime or lemon trees. The plants I put into the ground were no longer than a young gooseberry bush; my master and his mistress passing by the place, stopped a while to look at me; at last, "Who knows," says he, "who knows but by the time these trees grow up and bear, you may go home to England, obtain the command of a ship, and return to reap the fruits of your labours; we see strange things sometimes happen." This, as he intended it, was a cutting sarcasm. I believe he thought it full as probable, that I should live to be king of Poland; yet it proved a prediction, and they (one of them at least) lived to see me return from England in the capacity he had mentioned, and pluck some of the first limes from those very trees. How can I proceed in my relation, till I raise a monument to the divine goodness, by comparing the circumstances in which the Lord has since placed me, with what I was at that time! Had you seen me, Sir, then go so pensive and solitary in the dead of night to wash my one shirt upon the rocks, and afterwards put it on wet, that it might dry upon my back, while I slept; had you seen me so poor a figure, that when a ship's boat came to the island, shame often constrained me to hide myself in the woods, from the sight of strangers; especially, had you known that my conduct, principles, and heart, were still darker than my outward condition, how little would you have imagined, that one, who so fully answered to the στυγητοι και μισουντες.* of the apostle, was reserved to be so peculiar an instance of the providential care and exuberant goodness of God. There was, at that time, but one earnest desire in my heart, which was not contrary and shocking both to religion and reason; that one desire, though my vile licentious life rendered me peculiarly unworthy of success, and though a thousand difficulties seemed to render it impossible, the Lord was pleased to gratify. But this favour, though great, and greatly prized, was a small thing compared to the blessings of his grace: he spared me, to give me the knowledge of himself, in the person of Jesus Christ; in love to my soul he delivered me from the pit of corruption, and cast all my aggravated sins behind his back. He brought my feet into the paths of peace. This is indeed the chief article, but it is not the whole. When he made me acceptable to himself in the beloved, he gave me favour in the sight of others. He raised me new friends, protected and guided me through a long series of dangers, and crowned every day with repeated mercies. To him I owe it that I am still alive, and that I am not still living in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and the want of all things: into that state I brought myself, but it was he who delivered me. He has given me an easy situation in life, some experimental knowledge of his gospel, a large acquaintance amongst his people, a friendship and correspondence with several of his most honoured servants. But it is as difficult to enumerate my present advantages, as it is fully to describe the evils and miseries of the preceding contrast.

I know not exactly how long things continued with me thus, but I believe near a twelvemonth. In this interval I wrote two or three times to my father; I gave him an account of my condition, and desired his assistance, intimating at the same time, that I had resolved not to return to England, unless he was pleased to send for me; I have likewise letters by me wrote to Mrs. N***** in that dismal period; so that at the lowest ebb, it seems I still retained a hope of seeing her again. My father applied to his friend in Liverpool, of whom I have spoken before, who gave orders accordingly to a captain of his, who was then fitting out for Gambia and Sierra Leon.

Some time within the year, as I have said, I obtained my master's consent to live with another trader, who dwelt upon the same island. Without his consent, I could not be taken, and he was unwilling to do it sooner, but it was then brought about. This was an alteration much to my advantage; I was soon decently clothed, lived in plenty, was considered as a companion, and trusted with the care of all his domestic effects, which were to the amount of some thousand pounds. This man had several factories and white servants in different places, particularly one in Kittam, the river I spoke of which runs so near along the sea coast. I was soon appointed to go there, where I had a share in the management of business, jointly with another of his servants: we lived as we pleased, business flourished, and our employer was satisfied. Here

* Hateful, and hating one another.

I began to be wretch enough to think myself happy. There is a significant phrase frequently used in those parts, that such a white man is grown black. It does not intend an alteration of complexion, but disposition. I have known several, who, settling in Africa after the age of thirty or forty, have at that time of life been gradually assimilated to the tempers, customs, and ceremonies of the natives, so far as to prefer that country to England; they have even become dupes to all the pretended charms, necromances, amulets, and divinations of the blinded negroes, and put more trust in such things than the wiser sort among the natives. A part of this spirit of infatuation was growing upon me; in time perhaps I might have yielded to the whole: I entered into closer engagements with the inhabitants, and should have lived and died a wretch amongst them, if the Lord had not watched over me for good. Not that I had lost those ideas which chiefly engaged my heart to England, but despair of seeing them accomplished made me willing to remain where I was. I thought I could more easily bear the disappointment in this situation, than nearer home. But, so soon as I had fixed my connections and plans with these views, the Lord providentially interposed to break them in pieces, and save me from ruin in spite of myself.

In the mean time, the ship that had orders to bring me home arrived at Sierra Leon: the captain made inquiry for me there and at the Benanoes; but understanding that I was at a great distance in the country, he thought no more about me. Without doubt the hand of God directed my being placed at Kittam just at this time; for, as the ship came no nearer than the Benanoes, and staid but a few days, if I had been at the Plantanes, I could not perhaps have heard of her till she had been sailed. The same must have certainly been the event, had I been sent to any other factory, of which my new master had several upon different rivers. But though the place I was at, was a long way up a river, much more than a hundred miles distant from the Plantanes, yet, by the peculiar situation which I have already noticed, I was still within a mile of the sea coast. To make the interposition more remarkable, I was at that very juncture going in quest of trade to a place at some distance directly from the sea, and should have set out a day or two before, but that we waited for a few articles from the next ship that offered, to complete the assortment of goods I was to take with me. We used sometimes to walk to the beach, in expectation of seeing a vessel pass by, but this was very precarious, as at that time the place was not at all resorted to by ships for trade. Many passed in the night, others kept at a considerable distance from the shore. In a word, I do not know that any one had stopped while I was there, though some had before, upon observing a signal made from the shore. In February, 1747 (I know not the exact day), my fellow servant walking down to the beach in the forenoon, saw a vessel sailing past, and made a smoke in token of trade. She was already a little beyond the place, and, as the wind was fair, the captain was in some demur whether to stop or not: however, had my companion been half an hour later, she would have gone beyond recal; but he soon saw her come to anchor, and went on board in a canoe: and this proved the very ship I have spoken of. One of the first questions he was asked, was concerning me; and when the captain understood I was so near, he came on shore to deliver his message. Had an invitation from home reached me, when I was sick and starving at the Plantanes, I should have received it as life from the dead; but now, for the reasons already given, I heard it at first with indifference. The captain, unwilling to lose me, told a story altogether of his own framing: he gave me a very plausible account, how he had missed a large packet of letters and papers, which he should have brought with him; but this, he said, he was sure of, having had it from my father's own mouth, as well as from his employer, that a person lately dead had left me L.400 per annum; adding further, that if I was any way embarrassed in my circumstances, he had express orders to redeem me, though it should cost one half of his cargo. Every particular of this was false; nor could I myself believe what he said about the estate; but, as I had some expectations from an aged relation, I thought a part of it might be true. But I was not long in suspense: for though my father's care and desire to see me had too little weight with me, and would have been insufficient to make me quit my retreat, yet the remembrance of Mrs. N*****, the hopes of seeing her, and the possibility, that accepting this offer might once more put me in a way of gaining her hand, prevailed over all other considerations. The captain further promised (and in this he kept his word), that I should lodge in his cabin, dine at his table, and be his constant companion, without expecting any service from me. And thus I was suddenly freed from a captivity of about fifteen months. I had neither a thought nor a desire of this change one hour before it took place. I embarked with him, and in a few hours lost sight of Kittam.

How much is their blindness to be pitied, who can see nothing but chance in events of this sort! So blind and stupid was I at that time, I made no reflection. I sought no direction in what had happened; like a wave of the sea driven with the wind, and tossed, I was governed by present appearances and

looked no further. But he, who is eyes to the blind, was leading me in a way that I knew not.

Now I am in some measure enlightened, I can easily perceive that it is in the adjustment and concurrence of these seemingly fortuitous circumstances, that the ruling power and wisdom of God is most evidently displayed in human affairs. How many such casual events may we remark in the history of Joseph, which had each a necessary influence in his ensuing promotion! If he had not dreamed, or if he had not told his dream; if the Midianites had passed by a day sooner or a day later; if they had sold him to any person but Potiphar; if his mistress had been a better woman; if Pharaoh's officers had not displeased their lord; or if any, or all these things had fallen out in any other manner or time than they did, all that followed had been prevented: the promises and purposes of God concerning Israel, their bondage, deliverances, polity, and settlement, must have failed; and, as all these things tended to, and centred in Christ, the promised Saviour, the desire of all nations would not have appeared; mankind had been still in their sins, without hope, and the counsels of God's eternal love in favour of sinners defeated. Thus we may see a connection between Joseph's first dream, and the death of our Lord Christ, with all its glorious consequences. So strong, though secret, is the concatenation between the greatest and the smallest events! What a comfortable thought is this to a believer to know, that amidst all the various interfering designs of men, the Lord has one constant design which he cannot, will not miss, namely, his own glory in the complete salvation of his people; and that he is wise, and strong, and faithful, to make even those things, which seem contrary to this design, subservient to promote it. You have allowed me to comment upon my own text, yet the length of this observation may need some apology. Believe me to be, with great respect,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

January 18, 1763.

LETTER VII.

DEAR SIR,

THE ship I was now on board as a passenger, was on a trading voyage for gold, ivory, dyers wood, and bees wax. It requires much longer time to collect a cargo of this sort than of slaves. The captain began his trade at Gambia, had been already four or five months in Africa, and continued there a year, or thereabouts, after I was with him; in which time we ranged the whole coast, as far as Cape Lopez, which lies about a degree south of the Equinoctial, and more than a thousand miles farther from England than the place where I embarked. I have little to offer worthy your notice, in the course of this tedious voyage. I had no business to employ my thoughts, but sometimes amused myself with mathematics: excepting this, my whole life, when awake, was a course of most horrid impiety and profaneness. I know not that I have ever since met so daring a blasphemer: not content with common oaths and imprecations, I daily invented new ones; so that I was often seriously reproved by the captain, who was himself a very passionate man, and not at all circumspect in his expressions. From the relation I at times made him of my past adventures, and what he saw of my conduct, and especially towards the close of the voyage when we met with many disasters, he would often tell me that, to his great grief he had a Jonah on board; that a curse attended me wherever I went; and that all the troubles he met with in the voyage, were owing to his having taken me into the vessel. I shall omit any further particulars, and after mentioning an instance or two of the Lord's mercy to me, while I was thus defying his power and patience, I shall proceed to something more worthy your perusal.

Although I lived long in the excess of almost every other extravagance, I never was fond of drinking; and my father has often been heard to say, that while I avoided drunkenness, he should still entertain hopes of my recovery. But sometimes I would promote a drinking-bout for a frolic's sake, as I termed it: for though I did not love the liquor, I was sold to do iniquity, and delighted in mischief. The last abominable frolic of this sort I engaged in, was in the river Gabon; the proposal and expense were my own. Four or five of us one evening sat down upon deck, to see who could hold out longest in drinking geneva and rum alternately; a large sea-shell supplied the place of a glass. I was very unfit for a challenge of this sort, for my head was always incapable of bearing much strong drink. However, I began and proposed the first toast, which, I well remember, was some imprecation against the person who should start first. This proved to be myself. My brain was soon fired: I arose, and danced about the deck like a madman; and while I was thus diverting my companions, my hat went overboard. By the light of the moon, I saw the ship's boat, and eagerly threw myself over the side to get into her, that I might recover my hat. My sight in that circumstance deceived me, for the boat was not within my reach, as I had thought, but perhaps twenty feet from the ship's side. I was, however, half over board, and should in one moment more have plunged myself into the water, when some-

body catched hold of my clothes behind, and pulled me back. This was an amazing escape; for I could not swim if I had been sober; the tide ran very strong; my companions were too much intoxicated to save me; and the rest of the ship's company were asleep. So near I was, to appearance, of perishing in that dreadful condition, and sinking into eternity under the weight of my own curse!

Another time, at Cape Lopez, some of us had been in the woods, and shot a buffalo or wild cow. We brought a part of it on board, and carefully marked the place (as I thought) where we left the remainder. In the evening we returned to fetch it; but we set out too late. I undertook to be their guide; but night coming on before we could reach the place, we lost our way. Sometimes we were in swamps up to the middle in water, and when we recovered dry land, we could not tell whether we were walking towards the ship, or wandering farther from her. Every step increased our uncertainty. The night grew darker, and we were entangled in inextricable woods, where, perhaps, the foot of man had never trod before. That part of the country is entirely abandoned to wild beasts, with which it prodigiously abounds. We were indeed in a terrible case, having neither light, food, nor arms, and expecting a tiger to rush from behind every tree. The stars were clouded, and we had no compass to form a judgment which way we were going. Had things continued thus, we had probably perished; but it pleased God, no beast came near us; and, after some hours perplexity, the moon arose, and pointed out the eastern quarter. It appeared then, as we had expected, that instead of drawing near to the sea side, we had been penetrating into the country; but, by the guidance of the moon, we at length came to the water side, a considerable distance from the ship. We got safe on board, without any other inconvenience than what we suffered from fear and fatigue.

Those and many other deliverances were all, at that time, entirely lost upon me. The admonitions of conscience, which, from successive repulses, had grown weaker and weaker, at length entirely ceased; and for a space of many months, if not for some years, I cannot recollect, that I had a single check of that sort. At times I have been visited with sickness, and have believed myself near to death, but I had not the least concern about the consequences. In a word, I seemed to have every mark of final impenitence and rejection; neither judgments nor mercies made the least impression on me.

At length, our business finished, we left Cape Lopez, and after a few days stay at the island of Annabona, to lay in provisions, we sailed homeward about the beginning of January 1748. From Annabona to England, without touching at any intermediate port, is a very long navigation, perhaps more than seven thousand miles, if we include the circuits necessary to be made on account of the trade-winds. We sailed first westward, till near the coast of Brazil, then northward, to the banks of Newfoundland, with the usual variations of wind and weather, and without meeting any thing extraordinary. On these banks we stopped half a day to fish for cod; this was then chiefly for diversion; we had provisions enough, and little expected those fish (as it afterwards proved) would be all we should have to subsist on. We left the banks on the first of March, with a hard gale of wind, westerly, which pushed us fast homewards. I should here observe, that, with the length of this voyage, in a hot climate, the vessel was greatly out of repair, and very unfit to support stormy weather; the sails and cordage were likewise very much worn out, and many such circumstances concurred to render what followed more dangerous. I think it was on the ninth of March, the day before our catastrophe, that I felt a thought pass through my mind, which I had long been a stranger to. Among the few books we had on board, one was Stanhope's Thomas a Kempis; I carelessly took it up, as I had often done before, to pass away the time; but I had still read it with the same indifference as if it was entirely a romance. However, while I was reading this time, an involuntary suggestion arose in my mind: What if these things should be true? I could not bear the force of the inference, as it related to myself: and therefore shut the book presently. My conscience witnessed against me once more, and I concluded that, true or false, I must abide the consequences of my own choice. I put an abrupt end to these reflections, by joining in with some vain conversation or other that came in my way.

But now the Lord's time was come, and the conviction I was so unwilling to receive, was deeply impressed upon me by an awful dispensation. I went to bed that night in my usual security and indifference, but was awakened from a sound sleep by the force of a violent sea which broke on board us; so much of it came down below as filled the cabin I lay in with water. This alarm was followed by a cry from the deck, that the ship was going down or sinking. As soon as I could recover myself, I essayed to go upon deck; but was met upon the ladder by the captain, who desired me to bring a knife with me. While I returned for the knife, another person went up in my room, who was instantly washed overboard. We had no leisure to lament him, nor did we expect to survive him long; for we soon found the ship was filling with water very fast. The sea had torn away the upper timbers on one side, and made a mere wreck in a few minutes. I shall not affect to describe this disaster in the marine dialect, which

would be understood by few; and therefore I can give you but a very inadequate idea of it. Taking in all circumstances, it was astonishing, and almost miraculous, that any of us survived to relate the story. We had immediate recourse to the pumps; but the water increased against our efforts. Some of us were set to baling in another part of the vessel; that is, to lade it out with buckets and pails. We had but eleven or twelve people to sustain this service; and, notwithstanding all we could do, she was full, or very near it: and then, with a common cargo, she must have sunk of course; but we had a great quantity of bees wax and wood on board, which were specifically lighter than the water; and as it pleased God that we received this shock in the very crisis of the gale, towards morning we were enabled to employ some means for our safety, which succeeded beyond hope. In about an hour's time, the day began to break, and the wind abated. We expended most of our clothes and bedding to stop the leaks (though the weather was exceedingly cold, especially to us, who had so lately left a hot climate); over these we nailed pieces of boards, and at last perceived the water abate. At the beginning of this hurry, I was little affected. I pumped hard, and endeavoured to animate myself and companions: I told one of them, that in a few days this distress would serve us to talk of over a glass of wine; but he being a less hardened sinner than myself, replied, with tears, "No; it is too late now." About nine o'clock, being almost spent with cold and labour, I went to speak with the captain, who was busied elsewhere, and just as I was returning from him, I said, almost without any meaning, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy upon us." This (though spoken with little reflection) was the first desire I had breathed for mercy for the space of many years. I was instantly struck with my own words; and, as Jehu said once, "What hast thou to do with peace?" so it directly occurred, "What mercy can there be for me?" I was obliged to return to the pump, and there I continued till noon, almost every passing wave breaking over my head; but we made ourselves fast with ropes, that we might not be washed away. Indeed, I expected that every time the vessel descended in the sea, she would rise no more; and though I dreaded death now, and my heart foreboded the worst, if the scriptures, which I had long since opposed, were indeed true; yet still I was but half convinced, and remained for a space of time in a sullen frame, a mixture of despair and impatience. I thought, if the Christian religion was true, I could not be forgiven; and was, therefore, expecting, and almost at times wishing, to know the worst of it. I am,

Your's, &c.

January 19, 1763.

LETTER VIII.

DEAR SIR,

THE tenth (that is, in the present style, the twenty-first) of March, is a day much to be remembered by me, and I have never suffered it to pass wholly unnoticed since the year 1748. On that day the Lord sent from on high, and delivered me out of the deep waters. I continued at the pump from three in the morning till near noon, and then I could do no more. I went and lay down upon my bed, uncertain, and almost indifferent, whether I should rise again. In an hour's time I was called, and not being able to pump, I went to the helm, and steered the ship till midnight, excepting a small interval for refreshment. I had here leisure and convenient opportunity for reflection. I began to think of my former religious professions; the extraordinary turns in my life; the calls, warnings, and deliverances I had met with; the licentious course of my conversation, particularly my unparalleled effrontery in making the gospel history (which I could not now be sure was false, though I was not yet assured it was true) the constant subject of profane ridicule. I thought, allowing the scripture premises, there never was nor could be such a sinner as myself; and then, comparing the advantages I had broken through, I concluded, at first, that my sins were too great to be forgiven. The scripture likewise seemed to say the same; for I had formerly been well acquainted with the Bible, and many passages, upon this occasion, returned upon my memory, particularly those awful passages, Prov. i. 24—31, Heb. vi. 4, 6, and 2 Pet. ii. 20, which seemed so exactly to suit my case and character, as to bring with them a presumptive proof of a divine original. Thus, as I have said, I waited with fear aud impatience to receive my inevitable doom. Yet, though I had thoughts of this kind, they were exceeding faint and disproportionate. It was not till long after (perhaps several years), till I had gained some clear views of the infinite righteousness and grace of Christ Jesus, my Lord, that I had a deep and strong apprehension of my state by nature and practice; and, perhaps, till then, I could not have borne the sight. So wonderfully does the Lord proportion the discoveries of sin and grace; for he knows our frame, and that, if he was to put forth the greatness of his power, a poor sinner would be instantly overwhelmed, and crushed as a moth. But to return: when I saw, beyond all probability, there was still hope of respite, and heard, about six in the evening, that the ship was freed from water, there arose a gleam of hope. I thought I saw the hand of God displayed in our favour: I began to pray; I could not utter the prayer

of faith; I could not draw near to a reconciled God, and call him father: my prayer was like the cry of the ravens, which yet the Lord does not disdain to hear. I now began to think of that Jesus whom I had so often derided: I recollected the particulars of his life and of his death; a death for sins not his own, but, as I remembered, for the sake of those who, in their distress, should put their trust in him. And now I chiefly wanted evidence. The comfortless principles of infidelity were deeply riveted, and I rather wished than believed these things were real facts. You will please to observe, Sir, that I collect the strain of the reasonings and exercises of my mind in one view; but I do not say that all this passed at one time. The great question now was, how to obtain faith. I speak not of an appropriating faith (of which I then knew neither the nature nor necessity), but how I should gain an assurance that the scriptures were of divine inspiration, and a sufficient warrant for the exercise of trust and hope in God. One of the first helps I received (in consequence of a determination to examine the New Testament more carefully) was from Luke xi. 13. I had been sensible, that to profess faith in Jesus Christ, when in reality I did not believe his history, was no better than a mockery of the heart-searching God; but here I found a Spirit spoken of, which was to be communicated to those who ask it. Upon this I reasoned thus: If this book is true, the promise in this passage must be true likewise; I have need of that very Spirit, by which the whole was written, in order to understand it aright. He has engaged here to give that Spirit to those who ask. I must therefore pray for it, and, if it is of God, he will make good his own word. My purposes were strengthened by John vii. 17. I concluded from thence, that though I could not say from my heart, that I believed the gospel, yet I would, for the present, take it for granted; and that, by studying it in this light, I should be more and more confirmed in it. If what I am writing could be perused by our modern infidels, they would say (for I too well know their manner), that I was very desirous to persuade myself into this opinion. I confess I was, and so would they be, if the Lord should shew them, as he was pleased to shew me at that time, the absolute necessity of some expedient to interpose between a righteous God and a sinful soul. Upon the gospel scheme I saw, at least, a peradventure of hope, but on every other side I was surrounded with black unfathomable despair.

The wind was now moderate, but continued fair, and we were still drawing nearer to our port. We began to recover from our consternation, though we were greatly alarmed by our circumstances. We found that, the water having floated all our moveables in the hold, all the casks of provision had been beaten to pieces by the violent motion of the ship: on the other hand, our live stock, such as pigs, sheep, and poultry, had been washed overboard in the storm. In effect, all the provisions we saved, except the fish I had mentioned, and some food of the pulse kind, which used to be given to the hogs (and there was but little of this left), all our other provisions would have subsisted us but a week, at scanty allowance. The sails, too, were mostly blown away, so that we advanced but slowly, even while the wind was fair. We imagined ourselves about a hundred leagues from the land, but were in reality much further. Thus we proceeded with an alternate prevalence of hope and fear. My leisure time was chiefly employed in reading and meditating on the scriptures, and praying to the Lord for mercy and instruction.

Things continued thus for four or five days, or perhaps longer, till we were awakened one morning, by the joyful shouts of the watch upon deck, proclaiming the sight of land. We were all soon raised at the sound. The dawning was uncommonly beautiful, and the light (just strong enough to discover distant objects) presented us with a gladdening prospect: it seemed a mountainous coast, about twenty miles from us, terminating in a cape or point, and a little farther, two or three small islands, or hummocks, as if just rising out of the water; the appearance and position seemed exactly answerable to our hopes, resembling the north-west extremity of Ireland, which we were steering for. We sincerely congratulated each other, making no doubt, but that if the wind continued, we should be in safety and plenty the next day. The small remainder of our brandy (which was reduced to little more than a pint) was, by the captain's orders, distributed amongst us; he adding at the same time, "We shall soon have brandy enough." We likewise eat up the residue of our bread for joy of this welcome sight, and were in the condition of men suddenly reprieved from death. While we were thus alert, the mate, with a graver tone than the rest, sunk our spirits by saying, that, "he wished it might prove land at last." If one of the common sailors had first said so, I know not but the rest would have beat him for raising such an unreasonable doubt. It brought on, however, warm debates and disputes whether it was land or no; but the case was soon unanswerably decided; for the day was advancing fast, and in a little time, one of our fancied islands began to grow red, from the approach of the sun, which soon arose just under it. In a word, we had been prodigal of our bread and brandy too nastily; our land was literally *in nubibus*, nothing but clouds, and in half an hour more the whole appearance was dissipated. Seamen have often known deceptions of this sort, but in our ex-

tremity we were loath to be undeceived. However, we comforted ourselves, that though we could not see the land, yet we should soon, the wind hitherto continuing fair; but, alas! we were deprived of this hope likewise. That very day our fair wind subsided into a calm, and the next morning the gales sprung up from the south-east, directly against us, and continued so for more than a fortnight afterwards. The ship was so wrecked, that we were obliged to keep the wind always on the broken side, unless the weather was quite moderate: thus we were driven, by the wind fixing in that quarter, still further from our port, to the northward of all Ireland, as far as the Lewis or western islands of Scotland, but a long way to the westward. In a word, our station was such as deprived us of any hope of being relieved by other vessels: it may, indeed, be questioned, whether our ship was not the very first that had been in that part of the ocean, at the same season of the year.

Provisions now began to grow very short; the half of a salted cod was a day's subsistence for twelve people; we had plenty of fresh water, but not a drop of stronger liquor; no bread, hardly any clothes, and very cold weather. We had incessant labour with the pumps, to keep the ship above water. Much labour and little food wasted us fast, and one man died under the hardship. Yet our sufferings were light in comparison of our just fears; we could not afford this bare allowance much longer, but had a terrible prospect of being either starved to death, or reduced to feed upon one another. Our expectations grew darker every day, and I had a further trouble peculiar to myself. The captain, whose temper was quite soured by distress, was hourly reproaching me (as I formerly observed) as the sole cause of the calamity, and was confident that if I was thrown overboard, and not otherwise, they should be preserved from death. He did not intend to make the experiment, but continual repetition of this in my ears gave me much uneasiness, especially as my conscience seconded his words. I thought it very probable, that all that had befallen us was on my account. I was, at last, found out by the powerful hand of God, and condemned in my own breast. However, proceeding in the method I have described, we began to conceive hopes greater than all our fears, especially, when at the time we were ready to give up all for lost, and despair was taking place in every countenance, we saw the wind come about to the very point we wished it, so as best to suit that broken part of the ship which must be kept out of the water, and to blow so gently as our few remaining sails could bear; and thus it continued without any observable alteration or increase, though at an unsettled time of the year, till we once more were called up to see the land, and were convinced that it was land indeed. We saw the island Tory, and the next day anchored in Lough Swilly, in Ireland; this was the eighth of April, just four weeks after the damage was sustained from the sea. When we came into this port our very last victuals were boiling in the pot; and before we had been there two hours, the wind, which seemed to have been providentially restrained till we were in a place of safety, began to blow with great violence, so that if we had continued at sea that night in our shattered, enfeebled condition, we must, in all human appearance, have gone to the bottom. About this time I began to know that there is a God that hears and answers prayer. How many times has he appeared for me since this great deliverance:—yet, alas! how distrustful and ungrateful is my heart unto this hour.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged humble servant.

January 19, 1763.

LETTER IX.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE brought my history down to the time of my arrival in Ireland, 1748; but before I proceed, I would look back a little, to give you some farther account of the state of my mind, and how far I was helped against inward difficulties, which beset me, at the time I had many outward hardships to struggle with. The straits of hunger, cold, weariness, and the fears of sinking, and starving, I shared in common with others; but besides these, I felt a heart-bitterness, which was properly my own; no one on board, but myself, being impressed with any sense of the hand of God in our danger and deliverance, at least not awakened to any concern for their souls. No temporal dispensations can reach the heart, unless the Lord himself applies them. My companions in danger were either quite unaffected, or soon forgot it all, but it was not so with me: not that I was any wiser or better than they, but because the Lord was pleased to vouchsafe me peculiar mercy, otherwise I was the most unlikely person in the ship to receive an impression, having been often before quite stupid and hardened in the very face of great dangers, and always to this time had hardened my neck still more and more after every reproof. I can see no reason why the Lord singled me out for mercy, but this, "that so it seemed good to him;" unless it was to show, by one astonishing instance, that with him "nothing is impossible."

There were no persons on board to whom I could open myself with freedom, concerning the state of my soul, none from whom I could ask advice. As to books, I had a New Testament, Stanhope, already mentioned, and a volume of bishop Beveridge's sermons, one of

which, upon our Lord's passion, affected me much. In perusing the New Testament, I was struck with several passages, particularly that of the fig-tree, Luke xiii. The case of St. Paul, 1 Tim. i. but particularly the prodigal, Luke xv. a case, I thought, that had never been so nearly exemplified, as by myself; and then the goodness of the father in receiving, nay, in running to meet such a son, and this intended only to illustrate the Lord's goodness to returning sinners,—this gained upon me. I continued much in prayer; I saw that the Lord had interposed so far to save me, and I hoped he would do more. The outward circumstances helped in this place to make me still more serious and earnest in crying to him, who alone could relieve me; and sometimes I thought I could be content to die, even for want of food, so I might but die a believer. Thus far I was answered, that before we arrived in Ireland, I had a satisfactory evidence in my own mind of the truth of the gospel, as considered in itself, and its exact suitableness to answer all my needs. I saw that, by the way they are pointed out, God might declare not his mercy only, but his justice also, in the pardon of sin, on the account of the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ. My judgment, at that time, embraced the sublime doctrine of "God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world to himself." I had no idea of those systems which allow the Saviour no higher honour than that of an upper servant, or, at the most, a demi-god. I stood in need of an Almighty Saviour, and such a one I found described in the New Testament. Thus far the Lord had wrought a marvellous thing: I was no longer an infidel; I heartily renounced my former profaneness, and I had taken up some right notions, was seriously disposed, and sincerely touched with a sense of the undeserved mercy I had received, in being brought safe through so many dangers. I was sorry for my mis-spent life, and purposed an immediate reformation: I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been deeply rooted in me, as a second nature. Thus, to all appearance, I was a new man.

But though I cannot doubt that this change, so far as it prevailed, was wrought by the Spirit and power of God, yet still I was greatly deficient in many respects. I was in some degree affected with a sense of my more enormous sins, but I was little aware of the innate evils of my heart. I had no apprehension of the spirituality and extent of the law of God; the hidden life of a christian, as it consists in communion with God by Jesus Christ, and a continual dependence on him for hourly supplies of wisdom, strength, and comfort, was a mystery of which I had as yet no knowledge. I acknowledged the Lord's mercy in pardoning what was past, but depended chiefly upon my own resolution to do better for the time to come. I had no christian friend or faithful minister to advise me, that my strength was no more than my righteousness; and though I soon began to inquire for serious books, yet, not having spiritual discernment, I frequently made a wrong choice, and I was not brought in the way of evangelical preaching or conversation (except a few times when I heard but understood not) for six years after this period. Those things the Lord was pleased to discover to me gradually. I learnt them here a little and there a little, by my own painful experience, at a distance from the common means and ordinances, and in the midst of the same course of evil company and bad examples I had been conversant with for some time. From this period I could no more make a mock at sin, or jest with holy things; I no more questioned the truth of scripture, or lost a sense of the rebukes of conscience. Therefore I consider this as the beginning of my return to God, or rather of his return to me; but I cannot consider myself to have been a believer (in the full sense of the word) till a considerable time afterwards.

I have told you that, in the time of our distress, we had fresh water in abundance; this was a considerable relief to us, especially as our spare diet was mostly salt fish, without bread. We drank plentifully, and were not afraid of wanting water; yet our stock of this likewise was much nearer to an end than we expected; we supposed that we had six large butts of water on board, and it was well that we were safe arrived in Ireland, before we discovered that five of them were empty, having been removed out of their places and stove by the violent agitation, when the ship was full of water. If we had found this out while we were at sea, it would have greatly heightened our distress, as we must have drank more sparingly.

While the ship was refitting at Lough Swilly, I repaired to Londonderry. I lodged at an exceeding good house, where I was treated with much kindness, and soon recruited my health and strength. I was now a serious professor, went twice a day to the prayers at church, and determined to receive the sacrament the next opportunity. A few days before, I signified my intention to the minister, as the rubric directs; but I found this practice was grown obsolete. At length the day came; I arose very early, was very particular and earnest in my private devotion; and, with the greatest solemnity, engaged myself to be the Lord's for ever, and only his. This was not a formal, but a sincere surrender, under a warm sense of mercies recently received; and yet, for want of a better knowledge of myself and the subtilty of Satan's temptations, I was seduced to forget the vows of God that were upon me. Upon the whole, though my views of the gospel salvation wer

very indistinct, I experienced a peace and satisfaction in the ordinance that day, to which I had been hitherto a perfect stranger.

The next day I was abroad with the mayor of the city and some other gentlemen a-shooting; I climbed up a steep bank, and pulling my fowling-piece after me, as I held it in a perpendicular direction, it went off so near my face, as to burn away the corner of my hat. Thus, when we think ourselves in the greatest safety, we are no less exposed to danger than when all the elements seem conspiring to destroy us. The divine providence, which is sufficient to deliver us in our utmost extremity, is equally necessary to our preservation in the most peaceful situation.

During our stay in Ireland I wrote home. The vessel I was in had not been heard of for eighteen months, and was given up for lost long before. My father had no more expectation of hearing that I was alive, but he received my letter a few days before he left London. He was just going out governor of York Fort, in Hudson's Bay, from whence he never returned. He sailed before I arrived in England, or he had purposed to take me with him; but God designing otherwise, one hindrance or other delayed us in Ireland till it was too late. I received two or three affectionate letters from him, but I never had the pleasure of seeing him more. I had hopes, that in three years more, I should have had an opportunity of asking his forgiveness for the uneasiness my disobedience had given him; but the ship that was to have brought him home, came without him. According to the best accounts we received, he was seized with the cramp when bathing, and drowned a little before her arrival in the Bay.—Excuse this digression.

My father, willing to contribute all in his power to my satisfaction, paid a visit before his departure to my friends in Kent, and gave his consent to the union which had been so long talked of. Thus, when I returned to ———, I found I had only the consent of one person to obtain: with her I as yet stood at as great an uncertainty as on the first day I saw her.

I arrived at ———, in the latter end of May, 1748, about the same day that my father sailed from the Nore, but found the Lord had provided me another father, in the gentleman whose ship had brought me home. He received me with great tenderness, and the strongest expressions of friendship and assistance: yet not more than he has since made good; for to him, as the instrument of God's gooodness, I owe my all. Yet it would not have been in the power, even of this friend, to have served me effectually, if the Lord had not met with me on my way home, as I have related. Till then I was like the man possessed with the legion. No arguments, no persuasion, no views of interest, no remembrance of the past, or regard to the future, could have constrained me within the bounds of common prudence. But now I was in some measure restored to my senses. My friend immediately offered me the command of a ship; but, upon mature consideration, I declined it for the present. I had been hitherto always unsettled and careless, and therefore thought I had better make another voyage first, and learn to obey, and acquire a farther insight and experience in business, before I ventured to undertake such a charge. The mate of the vessel I came home in, was preferred to the command of a new ship, and I engaged to go in the station of mate with him. I made a short visit to London, &c. which did not fully answer my views. I had but one opportunity of seeing Mrs. N*****, of which I availed myself very little, for I was always exceeding awkward in pleading my own cause, *viva voce*. But after my return to L———, I put the question in such a manner, by letter, that she could not avoid (unless I had greatly mistaken her) coming to some sort of an explanation. Her answer, though penned with abundance of caution, satisfied me; as I collected from it, that she was free from any other engagement, and not unwilling to wait the event of the voyage I had undertaken. I should be ashamed to trouble you with these little details, if you had not yourself desired me.

I am,

Your's &c.

January 20, 1763.

LETTER X.

DEAR SIR,

My connections with sea affairs have often led me to think, that the varieties observable in christian experience may be properly illustrated from the circumstances of a voyage. Imagine to yourself a number of vessels, at different times, and from different places, bound to the same port; there are some things in which all these would agree,—the compass steered by, the port in view, the general rules of navigation, both as to the management of the vessel and determining their astronomical observations, would be the same in all. In other respects they would differ; perhaps no two of them would meet with the same distribution of winds and weather. Some we see set out with a prosperous gale; and, when they almost think their passage secured, they are checked by adverse blasts; and, after enduring much hardship and danger, and frequent expectations of shipwreck, they just escape and reach the desired haven. Others meet the greatest difficulties at first; they put forth in a storm, and are often beaten back; at length their voyage proves favourable, and they

enter the port with a πλησφορια, a rich and abundant entrance. Some are hard beset with cruisers and enemies, and obliged to fight their way through; others meet with little remarkable in their passage. Is it not thus in the spiritual life? All true believers walk by the same rule, and mind the same things. The word of God is their compass; Jesus is both their polar star and their sun of righteousness; their hearts and faces are all set Sion-ward. Thus far they are as one body, animated by one spirit; yet their experience, formed upon these common principles, is far from being uniform. The Lord, in his first call, and his following dispensations, has a regard to the situation, temper, and talents of each, and to the particular services or trials he has appointed them for. Though all are exercised at times, yet some pass through the voyage of life much more smoothly than others. But he "who walketh upon the wings of the wind, and measures the waters in the hollow of his hand," will not suffer any, of whom he has taken charge, to perish in the storms, though, for a season, perhaps, many of them are ready to give up all hopes.

We must not, therefore, make the experience of others, in all respects, a rule to ourselves, nor our own, a rule to others; yet, these are common mistakes, and productive of many more. As to myself, every part of my case has been extraordinary. I have hardly met a single instance resembling it. Few, very few, have been recovered from such a dreadful state; and the few that have been thus favoured, have generally passed through the most severe convictions; and after the Lord has given them peace, their future lives have been usually more zealous, bright, and exemplary, than common. Now, as on the one hand, my convictions were very moderate, and far below what might have been expected from the dreadful review I had to make; so, on the other, my first beginnings in a religious course were as faint as can be well imagined. I never knew that season alluded to, Jer. ii. 2. Rev. ii. 4. usually called the time of the first love. Who would not expect to hear, that, after such a wonderful unhoped-for deliverance, as I had received, and, after my eyes were in some measure enlightened to see things aright, I should immediately cleave to the Lord and his ways, with full purpose of heart, and consult no more with flesh and blood? But, alas! it was far otherwise with me: I had learned to pray; I set some value upon the word of God, and was no longer a libertine; but my soul still cleaved to the dust. Soon after my departure from L——, I began to intermit, and grow slack in waiting upon the Lord; I grew vain and trifling in my conversation; and though my heart smote me often, yet my armour was gone, and I declined fast; and by the time I arrived at Guinea, I seemed to have forgotten all the Lord's mercies, and my own engagements, and was (profaneness excepted) almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared a train of temptations, and I became his easy prey; and, for about a month, he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which, a few months before, I could not have supposed myself any longer capable. How much propriety is there in the apostle's advice, "Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." O, who can be sufficiently upon their guard? Sin first deceives, and then it hardens. I was now fast bound in chains; I had little desire, and no power at all to recover myself. I could not but at times reflect how it was with me: but, if I attempted to struggle with it, it was in vain. I was just like Samson, when he said, "I will go forth and shake myself as at other times;" but the Lord was departed, and he found himself helpless in the hands of his enemies. By the remembrance of this interval, the Lord has often instructed me since, what a poor creature I am in myself, incapable of standing a single hour without continual fresh supplies of strength and grace from the fountain head.

At length the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, interposed in my behalf. My business in this voyage, while upon the coast, was to sail from place to place in the long-boat to purchase slaves. The ship was at Sierra Leone, and I then at the Plantanes, the scene of my former captivity, where every thing I saw might seem to remind me of my ingratitude. I was in easy circumstances, courted by those who formerly despised me. The lime trees I had planted were grown tall, and promised fruit the following year; against which time I had expectations of returning with a ship of my own But none of these things affected me, till, as I have said, the Lord again interposed to save me. He visited me with a violent fever, which broke the fatal chain, and once more brought me to myself. But, O what a prospect! I thought myself now summoned away. My past dangers and deliverances, my earnest prayers in the time of trouble, my solemn vows before the Lord at his table, and my ungrateful returns for all his goodness were all present to my mind at once. Then I began to wish that the Lord had suffered me to sink into the ocean, when I first besought his mercy. For a little while I concluded the door of hope to be quite shut; but this continued not long. Weak, and almost delirious, I arose from my bed, and crept to a retired part of the island; and here I found a renewed liberty to pray. I durst make no more resolves, but cast myself before the Lord, to do with me as he should please. I do not remember that any particular text, or remarkable discovery, was presented to my mind; but in general I was enabled to hope and believe in a crucified Saviour. The burden was removed from my conscience, and

not only my peace, but my health was restored; I cannot say instantaneously, but I recovered from that hour; and so fast, that when I returned to the ship, two days afterwards, I was perfectly well before I got on board. And from that time, I trust, I have been delivered from the power and dominion of sin; though, as to the effects and conflicts of sin dwelling in me, I still "groan, being burdened." I now began again to wait upon the Lord; and though I have often grieved his Spirit, and foolishly wandered from him since, (when, alas! shall I be more wise?) yet his powerful grace has hitherto preserved me from such black declensions as this I have last recorded; and I humbly trust in his mercy and promises, that he will be my guide and guard to the end.

My leisure hours in this voyage were chiefly employed in learning the Latin language, which I had now entirely forgot. This desire took place from an imitation I had seen of one of Horace's odes in a magazine. I began the attempt under the greatest disadvantages possible; for I pitched upon a poet, perhaps the most difficult of the poets, even Horace himself, for my first book. I had picked up an old English translation of him, which, with Castalio's Latin Bible, were all my helps. I forgot a Dictionary; but I would not therefore give up my purpose. I had the edition *in usum Delphini*, and by comparing the Odes with the interpretation, and tracing the words, I could understand from one place to another, by the index, with the assistance I could get from the Latin Bible; in this way, by dint of hard industry, often waking when I might have slept, I made some progress before I returned, and not only understood the sense and meaning of many Odes, and some of the Epistles, but began to relish the beauties of the composition, and acquire a spice of what Mr. Law calls classical enthusiasm. And, indeed, by this means, I had Horace more *ad unguem* than some who are masters of the Latin tongue; for my helps were so few, that I generally had the passage fixed in my memory, before I could fully understand its meaning.

My business in the long boat, during the eight months we were upon the coast, exposed me to innumerable dangers and perils, from burning suns, and chilling dews, winds, rains, and thunder-storms, in the open boat; and on shore, from long journeys through the woods, and the temper of the natives, who are, in many places, cruel, treacherous, and watching opportunities for mischief. Several boats in the same time were cut off; several white men poisoned, and, in my own boat, I buried six or seven people with fevers. When going on shore, or returning from it, in their little canoes, I have been more than once or twice overset by the violence of the surf, or break of the sea, and brought to land half dead (for I could not swim). An account of such escapes as I still remember, would swell to several sheets, and many more I have perhaps forgot; I shall only select one instance, as a specimen of that wonderful providence which watched over me for good, and which, I doubt not, you will think worthy of notice.

When our trade was finished, and we were near sailing to the West Indies, the only remaining service I had to perform in the boat, was to assist in bringing the wood and water from the shore. We were then at Rio Cestors. I used to go into the river in the afternoon, with the sea breeze, procure my loading in the evening, and return on board in the morning, with the land wind. Several of these little voyages I had made; but the boat was grown old, and almost unfit for use. This service likewise was almost completed. One day, having dined on board, I was preparing to return to the river, as formerly; I had taken leave of the captain, received his orders, was ready in the boat, and just going to put off, as we term it; that is, to let go our ropes, and sail from the ship. In that instant, the captain came up from the cabin, and called me on board again. I went, expecting further orders; but he said he had "taken it in his head" (as he phrased it), that I should remain that day in the ship, and accordingly ordered another man to go in my room. I was surprised at this, as the boat had never been sent away without me before; and asked him the reason. He could give me no reason, but as above, that so he would have it. Accordingly, the boat went without me, but returned no more. She sunk that night in the river, and the person who had supplied my place was drowned. I was much struck when we received news of the event the next morning. The captain himself, though quite a stranger to religion, so far as to deny a particular providence, could not help being affected; but he declared, that he had no other reason for countermanding me at that time, but that it came suddenly into his mind to detain me. I wonder I omitted this in my eight letters, as I have always thought it one of the most extraordinary circumstances of my life.

I am, dear Sir,
Your humble servant.

January, 21, 1763.

LETTER XI.

DEAR SIR,

A FEW days after I was thus wonderfully saved from an unforeseen danger, we sailed for Antigua, and from thence proceeded to Charleston, in South Carolina. In this place there are many serious people; but I knew not how to find them out. Indeed, I was not aware of a difference; but supposed that al

who attended public worship were good christians. I was as much in the dark about preaching, not doubting but whatever came from the pulpit must be very good. I had two or three opportunities of hearing a dissenting minister, named Smith, who, by what I have known since, I believe to have been an excellent and powerful preacher of the gospel; and there was something in his manner that struck me; but I did not rightly understand him. The best words that men can speak are ineffectual, till explained and applied by the Spirit of God, who alone can open the heart. It pleased the Lord for some time, that I should learn no more than what he enabled me to collect from my own experience and reflection. My conduct was now very inconsistent. Almost every day, when business would permit, I used to retire into the woods and fields (for these, when at hand, have always been my favourite oratories); and I trust I began to taste the sweets of communion with God, in the exercises of prayer and praise, and yet I frequently spent the evening in vain and worthless company. Indeed, my relish for worldly diversions was much weakened, and I was rather a spectator than a sharer in their pleasures; but I did not as yet see the necessity of an absolute forbearance. Yet, as my compliance with custom and company was chiefly owing to want of light, rather than to an obstinate attachment, and the Lord was pleased to preserve me from what I knew was sinful, I had, for the most part, peace of conscience, and my strongest desires were towards the things of God. As yet I knew not the force of that precept, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," but very often ventured upon the brink of temptation; but the Lord was gracious to my weakness, and would not suffer the enemy to prevail against me. I did not break with the world at once (as might, in my case, have been expected), but I was gradually led to see the inconvenience and folly of one thing after another, and, when I saw it, the Lord strengthened me to give it up. But it was some years before I was set quite at liberty from occasional compliance in many things in which, at this time, I dare by no means allow myself.

We finished our voyage, and arrived in L———. When the ship's affairs were settled, I went to London, and from thence (as you may suppose) I soon repaired to Kent. More than seven years were now elapsed since my first visit. No views of the kind could seem more chimerical, or could subsist under greater discouragements, than mine had done; yet, through the over-ruling goodness of God, while I seemed abandoned to myself, and blindly following my own passions, I was guided, by a hand that I knew not, to the accomplishment of my wishes. Every obstacle was now removed. I had renounced my former follies, my interest was established, and friends on all sides consenting, the point was now entirely between ourselves, and, after what had passed, was easily concluded. Accordingly, our hands were joined on the first of February 1750.

The satisfaction I have found in this union, you will suppose, has been greatly heightened by reflections on the former disagreeable contrasts I had passed through, and the views I have had of the singular mercy and providence of the Lord in bringing it to pass. If you please to look back to the beginning of my sixth letter, I doubt not but you will allow that few persons have known more, either of the misery or happiness, of which human life (as considered in itself) is capable. How easily, at a time of life when I was so little capable of judging (but a few months more than seventeen), might my affections have been fixed where they could have met with no return, or where success would have been the heaviest disappointment. The long delay I met with was likewise a mercy; for, had I succeeded a year or two sooner, before the Lord was pleased to change my heart, we must have been mutually unhappy, even as to the present life. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my days.

But alas! I soon began to feel that my heart was still hard and ungrateful to the God of my life. This crowning mercy, which raised me to all I could ask or wish in a temporal view, and which ought to have been an animating motive to obedience and praise, had a contrary effect. I rested in the gift, and forgot the giver. My poor narrow heart was satisfied. A cold and careless frame, as to spiritual things, took place, and gained ground daily. Happy for me, the season was advancing, and in June I received orders to repair to L———. This roused me from my dream. I need not tell you, that I found the pains of absence and separation fully proportioned to my preceding pleasure. It was hard, very hard, to part, especially as conscience interfered, and suggested to me how little I deserved that we should be spared to meet again. But the Lord supported me. I was a poor faint idolatrous creature; but I had now some acquaintance with the way of access to a throne of grace, by the blood of Jesus, and peace was soon restored to my conscience. Yet, through all the following voyage, my irregular and excessive affections were as thorns in my eyes, and often made my other blessings tasteless and insipid. But He, who doth all things well, over-ruled this likewise for good. It became an occasion of quickening me in prayer, both for her and myself; it increased my indifference for company and amusement; it habituated me to a kind of voluntary self-denial, which I was

afterwards taught to improve to a better purpose.

While I remained in England, we corresponded every post; and all the while I used the sea afterwards, I constantly kept up the practice of writing two or three times a-week (if weather and business permitted), though no conveyance homeward offered for six or eight months together. My packets were usually heavy; and as not one of them at any time miscarried, I have to the amount of nearly two hundred sheets of paper now lying in my bureau of that correspondence. I mention this little relief I had contrived to soften the intervals of absence, because it had a good effect beyond my first intention. It habituated me to think and write upon a great variety of subjects; and I acquired, insensibly, a greater readiness of expressing myself, than I should have otherwise attained. As I gained more ground in religious knowledge, my letters became more serious, and, at times, I still find an advantage in looking them over, especially as they remind me of many providential incidents, and the state of my mind at different periods in these voyages, which would otherwise have escaped my memory.

I sailed from L——— in August 1750, commander of a good ship. I have no very extraordinary events to recount from this period, and shall, therefore, contract my memoirs, lest I become tedious; yet I am willing to give you a brief sketch of my history down to 1755, the year of my settlement in my present situation. I had now the command and care of thirty persons; I endeavoured to treat them with humanity, and to set them a good example. I likewise established public worship, according to the liturgy, twice every Lord's day, officiating myself. Farther than this I did not proceed, while I continued in that employment.

Having now much leisure, I prosecuted the study of the Latin with good success. I remembered a dictionary this voyage, and procured two or three other books; but still it was my hap to choose the hardest. I added Juvenal to Horace; and, for prose authors, I pitched upon Livy, Cæsar, and Sallust. You will easily conceive, Sir, that I had hard work to begin (where I should have left off) with Horace and Livy. I was not aware of the difference of style; I had heard Livy highly commended, and was resolved to understand him. I began with the first page, and laid down a rule, which I seldom departed from, not to proceed to a second period till I understood the first, and so on. I was often at a stand, but seldom discouraged; here and there I found a few lines quite obstinate, and was forced to break in upon my rule, and gave them up, especially as my edition had only the text, without any notes to assist me. But there were not many such; for, before the close of that voyage, I could (with a few exceptions) read Livy from end to end, almost as readily as an English author. And I found, in surmounting this difficulty, I had surmounted all in one. Other prose authors, when they came in my way, cost me little trouble. In short, in the space of two or three voyages, I became tolerably acquainted with the best classics (I put all I have to say upon this subject together); I read Terence, Virgil, and several pieces of Cicero, and the modern classics, Buchanan, Erasmus, and Cassimir. At length I conceived a design of becoming Ciceronian myself, and thought it would be a fine thing indeed to write pure and elegant Latin. I made some essays towards it, but by this time the Lord was pleased to draw me nearer to himself, and to give me a fuller view of the "pearl of great price," the inestimable treasure hid in the field of the holy scriptures; and, for the sake of this, I was made willing to part with all my newly acquired riches. I began to think that life was too short (especially my life) to admit of leisure for such elaborate trifling. Neither poet nor historian could tell me a word of Jesus, and I therefore applied myself to those who could. The classics were at first restrained to one morning in the week, and at length quite laid aside. I have not looked into Livy these five years, and I suppose I could not well understand him. Some passages in Horace and Virgil I still admire, but they seldom come in my way. I prefer Buchanan's Psalms to a whole shelf of Elzevirs. But thus much I have gained, and more than this I am not solicitous about, so much of the Latin as enables me to read any useful or curious book that is published in that language. About the same time, and for the same reason that I quarrelled with Livy, I laid aside the mathematics. I found they not only cost me much time, but engrossed my thoughts too far; my head was literally full of *schemes*. I was weary of cold contemplative truths, which can neither warm nor amend the heart, but rather tend to aggrandize self. I found no traces of this wisdom in the life of Jesus, or the writings of Paul. I do not regret that I have had some opportunities of knowing the first principles of these things; but I see much cause to praise the Lord, that he inclined me to stop in time; and that whilst I was "spending my labour for that which is not bread," he was pleased to set before me "wine and milk, without money and without price."

My first voyage was fourteen months, through various scenes of danger and difficulty, but nothing very remarkable; and as I intend to be more particular with regard to the second, I shall only say that I was preserved from every harm; and having seen many fall on my right hand and on my left, I was brought home in peace, and restored to where my

thoughts had been often directed, November 2, 1751.

I am,

Your's &c.

January 22, 1763.

LETTER XII.

DEAR SIR,

I ALMOST wish I could recal my last sheet, and retract my promise. I fear I have engaged too far, and shall prove a mere *egotist*. What have I more that can deserve your notice? However, it is some satisfaction that I am now writing to yourself only; and I believe, you will have candour to excuse, what nothing but a sense of your kindness could extort from me.

Soon after the period where my last closes, that is, in the interval between my first and second voyage after my marriage, I began to keep a sort of diary, a practice which I have found of great use. I had, in this interval, repeated proofs of the ingratitude and evil of my heart. A life of ease, in the midst of my friends, and the full satisfaction of my wishes, was not favourable to the progress of grace, and afforded cause of daily humiliation. Yet, upon the whole, I gained ground. I became acquainted with books, which gave me a further view of christian doctrine and experience, particularly Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man, Hervey's Meditations, and the Life of Colonel Gardiner. As to preaching, I heard none but of the common sort, and had hardly an idea of any better; neither had I the advantage of christian acquaintance; I was likewise greatly hindered by a cowardly reserved spirit; I was afraid of being thought precise; and, though I could not live without prayer, I durst not propose it, even to my wife, till she herself first put me upon it; so far was I from those expressions of zeal and love, which seemed so suitable to the case of one who has had much forgiven. In a few months the returning season called me abroad again, and I sailed from L———— in a new ship, July 1752.

A sea-faring life is necessarily excluded from the benefit of public ordinances and christian communion; but, as I have observed, my loss upon these heads was at this time but ——all. In other respects, I know not any ling that seems more favourable, or affords ater advantages to an awakened mind, for xmoting the life of God in the soul, espe-illy to a person who has the command of a p, and thereby has it in his power to re-ün gross irregularities in others, and to dis-e of his own time; and still more so in frican voyages, as these ships carry a double nportion of men and officers to most others, ·ich made my department very easy; and, excepting the hurry of trade, &c. upon the coast, which is rather occasional than constant, afforded me abundance of leisure. To be at sea in these circumstances, withdrawn out of the reach of innumerable temptations, with opportunity and a turn of mind disposed to observe the wonders of God in the great deep, with the two noblest objects of sight, the expanded heavens, and the expanded ocean, continually in view; and where evident interpositions of Divine Providence, in answer to prayer, occur almost every day; these are helps to quicken and confirm the life of faith, which, in a good measure, supply to a religious sailor the want of those advantages which can be only enjoyed upon the shore. And, indeed, though my knowledge of spiritual things (as knowledge is usually estimated) was, at this time, very small, yet I sometimes look back with regret upon those scenes. I never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in my two last voyages to Guinea, when I was either almost secluded from society on ship-board, or when on shore among the natives. I have wandered through the woods, reflecting on the singular goodness of the Lord to me, in a place where, perhaps, there was not a person who knew him for some thousand miles round me. Many a time, upon these occasions, I have restored the beautiful lines of Propertius to the right owner; lines full of blasphemy and madness when addressed to a creature, but full of comfort and propriety in the mouth of a believer

Sic ego desertis possim bene vivere sylvis
Quo nulla humano sit via trita pede;
Tu mihi curarum requies, tu nocte volatra
Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis

PARAPHRASED.

In desert woods with thee, my God,
Where human footsteps never trod,
How happy could I be!
Thou my repose from care, my light
Amidst the darkness of the night,
In solitude my company.

In the course of this voyage I was wonderfully preserved in the midst of many obvious unforeseen dangers. At one time there was a conspiracy amongst my own people to turn pirates, and take the ship from me. When the plot was nearly ripe, and they only waited a convenient opportunity, two of those concerned in it were taken ill one day; one of them died, and he was the only person I buried while on board. This suspended the affair, and opened a way to its discovery, or the consequence might have been fatal. The slaves on board were likewise frequently plotting insurrections, and were sometimes upon the very brink of mischief; but it was always disclosed in due time. When I have thought myself most secure, I have been suddenly alarmed with danger; and when I have almost despaired of life, as sudden a deliverance has been vouchsafed me. My stay upon the coast

was long, and the trade very precarious; and, in the pursuit of my business, both on board and on shore, I was in deaths often. Let the following instance serve as a specimen.

I was at a place called Mana, near Cape Mount, where I had transacted very large concerns; and had, at the time I am speaking of, some debts and accounts to settle, which required my attendance on shore, and I intended to go the next morning. When I arose, I left the ship according to my purpose; but when I came near the shore, the surf, or break of the sea, ran so high, that I was almost afraid to attempt landing. Indeed, I had often ventured at a worse time, but I felt an inward hindrance and backwardness, which I could not account for; the surf furnished a pretext for indulging it, and after waiting and hesitating for about half an hour, I returned to the ship, without doing any business; which I think I never did, but that morning, in all the time I used that trade. But I soon perceived the reason of all this. It seems, the day before I intended to land, a scandalous and groundless charge had been laid against me (by whose instigation I could never learn), which greatly threatened my honour and interest, both in Africa and England, and would perhaps, humanly speaking, have affected my life, if I had landed according to my intention. I shall, perhaps, inclose a letter, which will give a full account of this strange adventure; and therefore shall say no more of it here, any further than to tell you, that an attempt, aimed to destroy either my life or my character, and which might very probably, in its consequences have ruined my voyage, passed off without the least inconvenience. The person most concerned owed me about a hundred pounds, which he sent me in a huff; and otherwise, perhaps, would not have paid me at all. I was very uneasy for a few hours, but was soon afterwards comforted. I heard no more of my accusation, till the next voyage, and then it was publicly acknowledged to have been a malicious calumny, without the least shadow of a ground.

Such were the vicissitudes and difficulties through which the Lord preserved me. Now and then both faith and patience were sharply exercised, but suitable strength was given; and as those things did not occur every day, the study of the Latin, of which I gave a general account in my last, was renewed, and carried on from time to time, when business would permit. I was mostly very regular in the management of my time. I allotted about eight hours for sleep and meals, eight hours for exercise and devotion, and eight hours to my books; and thus, by diversifying my engagements, the whole day was agreeably filled up, and I seldom found a day too long, or an hour to spare. My studies kept me employed, and so far it was well; otherwise they were hardly worth the time they cost, as they led me to an admiration of false models and false maxims; an almost unavoidable consequence, I suppose, of an admiration of classic authors. Abating what I have attained of the language, I think I might have read Cassandra or Cleopatra to as good purpose as I read Livy, whom I now account an equal romancer, though in a different way.

From the coast, I went to St. Christopher's; and here my idolatrous heart was its own punishment. The letters I expected from Mrs. N***** were, by mistake, forwarded to Antigua, which had been at first proposed as our port. As I was certain of her punctuality in writing, if alive, I concluded, by not hearing from her, that she was surely dead. This fear affected me more and more; I lost my appetite and rest; I felt an incessant pain in my stomach, and in about three weeks time I was near sinking under the weight of an imaginary stroke. I felt some severe symptoms of that mixture of pride and madness, which is commonly called a broken heart; and, indeed, I wonder that this case is not more common than it appears to be. How often do the potsherds of the earth presume to contend with their Maker! and what a wonder of mercy is it, that they are not all broken! However, my complaint was not all grief; conscience had a share. I thought my unfaithfulness to God had deprived me of her, especially my backwardness in speaking of spiritual things, which I could hardly attempt even to her. It was this thought, that I had lost invaluable, irrecoverable opportunities, which both duty and affection should have engaged me to improve, that chiefly stung me; and I thought I could have given the world to know she was living, that I might at least discharge my engagements by writing, though I were never to see her again. This was a sharp lesson, but I hope it did me good; and when I had thus suffered some weeks, I thought of sending a small vessel to Antigua. I did so, and she brought me several packets, which restored my health and peace, and gave me a strong contrast of the Lord's goodness to me, and my unbelief and ingratitude towards him.

In August, 1753, I returned to L———. My stay was very short at home that voyage, only six weeks; in that space nothing very remarkable occurred; I shall therefore begin my next with an account of my third and last voyage. And thus I give both you and myself hopes of a speedy period to these memoirs, which begin to be tedious and minute, even to myself; only I am animated by the thought that I write at your request, and have therefore an opportunity of shewing myself,

Your obliged servant

January 31, 1763.

LETTER XIII.

DEAR SIR,

My third voyage was shorter and less perplexed than either of the former. Before I sailed, I met with a young man, who had formerly been a midshipman and my intimate companion, on board the Harwich. He was, at the time I first knew him, a sober youth, but I found too much success in my unhappy attempts to infect him with libertine principles. When we met at L———, our acquaintance renewed upon the ground of our former intimacy. He had good sense, and had read many books. Our conversation frequently turned upon religion, and I was desirous to repair the mischief I had done him. I gave him a plain account of the manner and reason of my change, and used every argument to persuade him to relinquish his infidel schemes; and when I sometimes pressed him so close, that he had no other reply to make, he would remind me that I was the very first person who had given him an idea of his liberty. This occasioned me many mournful reflections. He was then going master to Guinea himself, but before his ship was ready, his merchant became a bankrupt, which disconcerted his voyage. As he had no further expectations for that year, I offered to take him with me as a companion, that he might gain a knowledge of the coast; and the gentleman who employed me promised to provide for him upon his return. My view in this was not so much to serve him in his business, as to have opportunity of debating the point with him at leisure; and I hoped, in the course of my voyage, my arguments, example, and prayers, might have some good effect on him. My intention in this step was better than my judgment, and I had frequent reason to repent it. He was exceedingly profane, and grew worse and worse: I saw in him a most lively picture of what I had once been, but it was very inconvenient to have it always before my eyes. Besides, he was not only deaf to my remonstrances himself, but laboured all that he could to counteract my influence upon others. His spirit and passions were likewise exceeding high, so that it required all my prudence and authority to hold him in any degree of restraint. He was as a sharp thorn in my side for some time; but at length I had an opportunity upon the coast of buying a small vessel, which I supplied with a cargo from my own, and gave him the command, and sent him away to trade on the ship's account. When we parted, I repeated and enforced my best advice. I believe his friendship and regard were as great as could be expected, where principles were so diametrically opposite. He seemed greatly affected when I left him, but my words had no weight with him. When he found himself at liberty from under my eye, he gave a hasty loose to every appetite; and his violent irregularities, joined to the heat of the climate, soon threw him into a malignant fever, which carried him off in a few days. He died convinced, but not changed. The account I had from those who were with him was dreadful; his rage and despair struck them all with horror, and he pronounced his own fatal doom before he expired, without any appearance that he either hoped or asked for mercy. I thought this awful contrast might not be improper to give you, as a stronger view of the distinguishing goodness of God to me, the chief of sinners.

I left the coast in about four months, and sailed for St. Christopher's. Hitherto I had enjoyed a perfect state of health, equally in every climate, for several years; but, upon this passage, I was visited with a fever, which gave me a very near prospect of eternity. I have obtained liberty to inclose you three or four letters, which will more clearly illustrate the state and measure of my experience, at different times, than any thing I can say at present. One of them you will find was written at this period, when I could hardly hold a pen, and had some reason to believe I should write no more. I had not that πληροφορια*, which is so desirable at a time when flesh and heart fail; but my hopes were greater than my fears, and I felt a silent composure of spirit, which enabled me to wait the event without much anxiety. My trust, though weak in degree, was alone fixed upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus; and those words, "he is able to save to the uttermost," gave me great relief. I was for a while troubled with a very singular thought. Whether it was a temptation, or that the fever disordered my faculties, I cannot say, but I seemed not so much afraid of wrath and punishment, as of being lost and overlooked amidst the myriads that are continually entering the unseen world. What is my soul, thought I, among such an innumerable multitude of beings? And this troubled me greatly. Perhaps the Lord will take no notice of me. I was perplexed thus for some time, but at last a text of scripture, very apposite to the case, occured to my mind, and put an end to the doubt: "The Lord knoweth them that are his." In about ten days, beyond the hopes of those about me, I began to amend, and by the time of our arrival in the West Indies, I was perfectly recovered.—I hope this visitation was made useful to me.

Thus far, that is, for about the space of six years, the Lord was pleased to lead me in a secret way. I had learned something of the evil of my heart; I had read the Bible over and over, with several good books, and had a general view of gospel truths. But my conceptions were, in many respects, confused;

* Full assurance.

not having, in all this time, met with one acquaintance who could assist my inquiries. But upon my arrival at St. Christopher's, this voyage, I found a captain of a ship from London, whose conversation was greatly helpful to me. He was, and is a member of Mr. B——r's church, a man of experience in the things of God, and of a lively, communicative turn. We discovered each other by some casual expressions in mixed company, and soon became (so far as business would permit) inseparable. For near a month, we spent every evening together, on board each other's ship alternately, and often prolonged our visits till towards day-break. I was all ears; and what was better, he not only informed my understanding, but his discourse inflamed my heart. He encouraged me to open my mouth in social prayer; he taught me the advantage of christian converse; he put me upon an attempt to make my profession more public, and to venture to speak for God. From him, or rather from the Lord, by his means, I received an increase of knowledge; my conceptions became clearer and more evangelical, and I was delivered from a fear which had long troubled me, the fear of relapsing into my former apostacy. But now I began to understand the security of the covenant of grace, and to expect to be preserved, not by my own power and holiness, but by the mighty power and promise of God, through faith in an unchangeable Saviour. He likewise gave me a general view of the state of religion, with the errors and controversies of the times (things to which I had been entirely a stranger), and finally directed me where to apply in London for further instruction. With these newly acquired advantages, I left him, and my passage homewards gave me leisure to digest what I had received. I had much comfort and freedom during those seven weeks, and my sun was seldom clouded. I arrived safe in L——, August, 1754.

My stay at home was intended to be but short, and by the beginning of November, I was again ready for the sea: but the Lord saw fit to over-rule my design. During the time I was engaged in the slave trade, I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness. I was, upon the whole, satisfied with it, as the appointment Providence had marked out for me; yet it was, in many respects, far from eligible. It is, indeed, accounted a genteel employment, and is usually very profitable, though to me it did not prove so, the Lord seeing that a large increase of wealth could not be good for me. However, I considered myself as a sort of gaoler or turnkey; and I was sometimes shocked with an employment that was perpetually conversant with chains, boits, and shackles. In this view I had often petitioned, in my prayers, that the Lord, in his own time, would be pleased to fix me in a more humane calling, and, if it might be, place me where I might have more frequent converse with his people and ordinances, and be freed from those long separations from home, which very often were hard to bear. My prayers were now answered, though in a way I little expected. I now experienced another sudden, unforeseen change of life. I was within two days of sailing, and, to all appearance in good health as usual; but in the afternoon, as I was sitting with Mrs. N*****, by ourselves, drinking tea, and talking over past events, I was in a moment seized with a fit, which deprived me of sense and motion, and left me no other sign of life than that of breathing. I suppose it was of the apoplectic kind. It lasted about an hour, and when I recovered, it left a pain and dizziness in my head, which continued with such symptoms, as induced the physicians to judge it would not be safe or prudent for me to proceed on the voyage. Accordingly, by the advice of my friend, to whom the ship belonged, I resigned the command the day before she sailed; and thus I was unexpectedly called from that service, and freed from a share of the future consequences of that voyage, which proved extremely calamitous. The person who went in my room, most of the officers, and many of the crew, died, and the vessel was brought home with great difficulty.

As I was now disengaged from business, I left L——, and spent most of the following year at London, and in Kent. But I entered upon a new trial. You will easily conceive that Mrs. N***** was not an unconcerned spectator, when I lay extended, and, as she thought, expiring upon the ground. In effect, the blow that struck me reached her in the same instant: she did not, indeed, immediately feel it, till her apprehensions on my account began to subside; but as I grew better, she became worse: her surprise threw her into a disorder, which no physicians could define, or medicines remove. Without any of the ordinary symptoms of a consumption, she decayed almost visibly, till she became so weak that she could hardly bear any one to walk across the room she was in. I was placed for about eleven months in what Dr. Young calls the

> "—dreadful post of observation,
> Darker every hour."

It was not till after my settlement in my present station, that the Lord was pleased to restore her by his own hand, when all hopes from ordinary means were at an end. But before this took place, I have some other particulars to mention, which must be the subject of the following sheet, which I hope will be the last on this subject, from

Your affectionate servant.

February 1, 1764.

LETTER XIV.

DEAR SIR,

BY the directions I had received from my friend at St. Kitt's, I soon found out a religious acquaintance in London. I first applied to Mr. B——, and chiefly attended upon his ministry, when in town. From him I received many helps both in public and private; for he was pleased to favour me with his friendship from the first. His kindness and the intimacy between us have continued and increased to this day; and of all my many friends, I am most deeply indebted to him. The late Mr. H——d was my second acquaintance; a man of a choice spirit, and an abundant zeal for the Lord's service. I enjoyed his correspondence till near the time of his death. Soon after, upon Mr. W——d's return from America, my two good friends introduced me to him; and though I had little personal acquaintance with him till afterwards, his ministry was exceeding useful to me. I had likewise access to some religious societies, and became known to many excellent christians in private life. Thus, when at London, I lived at the fountain-head, as it were, for spiritual advantages. When I was in Kent, it was very different, yet I found some serious persons there; but the fine variegated woodland country afforded me advantages of another kind. Most of my time, at least some hours every day, I passed in retirement, when the weather was fair; sometimes in the thickest woods, sometimes on the highest hills, where almost every step varied the prospect. It has been my custom for many years, to perform my devotional exercises *sub dio*, when I have opportunity, and I always find these rural scenes have some tendency both to refresh and compose my spirits. A beautiful diversified prospect gladdens my heart. When I am withdrawn from the noise and petty works of men, I consider myself as in the great temple, which the Lord has built for his own honour.

The country between Rochester and Maidstone, bordering upon the Medway, was well suited to the turn of my mind; and was I to go over it now, I could point to many a place where I remember either to have earnestly sought, or happily found, the Lord's comfortable presence with my soul. And thus I lived, sometimes at London, and sometimes in the country, till the autumn of the following year. All this while I had two trials, more or less, upon my mind; the first and principal was Mrs. N*****'s illness; she still grew worse, and I had daily more reason to fear that the hour of separation was at hand. When faith was in exercise, I was in some measure resigned to the Lord's will; but too often my heart rebelled, and I found it hard either to trust or to submit. I had likewise some care about my future settlement; the African trade was overdone that year, and my friends did not care to fit out another ship till mine returned. I was some time in suspense; but, indeed, a provision of food and raiment has seldom been a cause of great solicitude to me. I found it easier to trust the Lord in this point than in the former, and accordingly this was first answered. In August I received an account that I was nominated to the office of ——. These places are usually obtained, or at least sought, by dint of much interest and application; but this came to me unsought and unexpected. I knew, indeed, my good friend in L—— had endeavoured to procure another post for me, but found it pre-engaged. I found afterwards, that the place I had missed would have been very unsuitable for me, and that this, which I had no thought of, was the very thing I could have wished for, as it afforded me much leisure, and the liberty of living in my own way. Several circumstances, unnoticed by others, concurred, to shew me that the good hand of the Lord was as remarkably concerned in this event as in any other leading turn of my life.

But when I gained this point, my distress in the other was doubled; I was obliged to leave Mrs. N*****, in the greatest extremity of pain and illness, when the physicians could do no more, and I had no ground of hope that I should see her again alive, but this, that nothing is impossible with the Lord. I had a severe conflict; but faith prevailed. I found the promise remarkably fulfilled, of strength proportioned to my need. The day before I set out, and not till then, the burden was entirely taken from my mind. I was strengthened to resign both her and myself to the Lord's disposal, and departed from her in a cheerful frame. Soon after I was gone, she began to amend, and recovered so fast, that in about two months I had the pleasure to meet her at Stone, on her journey to L——.

And now, I think, I have answered, if not exceeded, your desire. Since October 1755, we have been comfortably settled here, and all my circumstances have been as remarkably smooth and uniform as they were various in former years. My trials have been light and few, not but that I still find, in the experience of every day, the necessity of a life of faith. My principal trial is, the body of sin and death, which makes me often to sigh out the apostle's complaint, "O wretched man, &c." But with him likewise I can say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." I live in a barren land, where the knowledge and power of the gospel is very low; yet here are a few of the Lord's per-

ple; and this wilderness has been a useful school to me, where I have studied more leisurely the truths which I gathered up in London. I brought down with me a considerable stock of notional truth; but I have since found, that there is no effectual teacher but God; that we can receive no further than he is pleased to communicate; and that no knowledge is truly useful to me, but what is made my own by experience. Many things, I thought I had learned, would not stand in an hour of temptation, till I had in this way learned them over again. Since the year 1757, I have had an increasing acquaintance in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where the gospel flourishes greatly. This has been a good school to me. I have conversed at large among all parties, without joining any; and in my attempts to hit the golden mean, I have sometimes been drawn too near the different extremes; yet the Lord has enabled me to profit by my mistakes. In brief, I am still a learner, and the Lord still condescends to teach me. I begin at length to see that I have attained but very little; but I trust in him to carry on his own work in my soul, and, by all the dispensations of his grace and providence, to increase my knowledge of him and of myself.

When I was fixed in a house, and found my business would afford me much leisure time, I considered in what manner I should improve it. And now, having reason to close with the apostle's determination, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," I devoted my life to the prosecution of spiritual knowledge, and resolved to pursue nothing but in subservience to this main design. This resolution divorced me, as I have already hinted, from the classics and mathematics. My first attempt was to learn so much Greek as would enable me to understand the New Testament and Septuagint; and when I had made some progress this way, I entered upon the Hebrew the following year; and two years afterwards, having surmised some advantages from the Syriac version, I began with that language. You must not think that I have attained, or ever aimed at, a critical skill in any of these. I had no business with them, but as in reference to something else. I never read one classic author in the Greek. I thought it too late in life to take such a round in this language as I had done in the Latin. I only wanted the signification of scriptural words and phrases; and for this I thought I might avail myself of Scapula, the Synopsis, and others, who had sustained the drudgery before me. In the Hebrew, I can read the historical books and psalms with tolerable ease; but in the prophetical and difficult parts, I am frequently obliged to have recourse to lexicons, &c. However, I know so much as to be able, with such helps as are at hand, to judge for myself the meaning of any passage I have occasion to consult. Beyond this I do not think of proceeding, if I can find better employment; for I would rather be some way useful to others, than die with the reputation of an eminent linguist.

Together with these studies, I have kept up a course of reading of the best writers in divinity that have come to my hand, in the Latin and English tongues, and some French; for I picked up the French at times while I used the sea. But within these two or three years I have accustomed myself chiefly to writing, and have not found time to read many books besides the scriptures.

I am the more particular in this account, as my case has been somewhat singular; for, in all my literary attempts, I have been obliged to strike out my own path, by the light I could acquire from books, as I have not had a teacher or assistant since I was ten years of age.

One word concerning my views to the ministry, and I have done. I have told you, that this was my dear mother's hope concerning me; but her death, and the scenes of life in which I afterwards engaged, seemed to cut off the probability. The first desires of this sort in my own mind, arose many years ago, from a reflection on Gal. i. 23, 24. I could not but wish for such a public opportunity to testify the riches of divine grace. I thought I was, above most living, a fit person to proclaim that faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners;" and as my life had been full of remarkable turns, and I seemed selected to show what the Lord could do, I was in some hopes that, perhaps, sooner or later, he might call me into his service.

I believe it was a distant hope of this that determined me to study the original scriptures; but it remained an imperfect desire in my own breast, till it was recommended to me by some christian friends. I started at the thought, when first seriously proposed to me; but afterwards set apart some weeks to consider the case, to consult my friends, and to intreat the Lord's direction. The judgment of my friends, and many things that occurred, tended to engage me. My first thought was to join the dissenters, from a presumption that I could not honestly make the required subscriptions; but Mr. C——, in a conversation upon these points, moderated my scruples; and preferring the established church in some other respects, I accepted a title from him, some months afterwards, and solicited ordination from the late archbishop of York. I need not tell you I met a refusal, nor what steps I took afterwards to succeed elsewhere. At present I desist from any applications. My desire to serve the Lord is not weakened; but I am

not so hasty to push myself forward as I was formerly. It is sufficient that he knows how to dispose of me, and that he both can and will do what is best. To him I commend myself: I trust that his will and my true interest are inseparable. To his name be glory for ever. And thus I conclude my story, and presume you will acknowledge I have been particular enough. I have room for no more, but to repeat that

I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

February 2, 1764.

FORTY-ONE LETTERS

ON

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

ORIGINALLY

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SIGNATURES

OF

OMICRON AND VIGIL.

LETTERS

ON

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

LETTER I.

ON TRUST IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, AND BENEVOLENCE TO HIS POOR.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE more I think of the point you proposed to me, the more I am confirmed to renew the advice I then gave. There is doubtless such a thing as christian prudence; but, my friend, beware of counterfeits. Self-love, and the evil heart of unbelief, will endeavour to obtrude upon us a prudence so called, which is as opposite to the former as darkness to light. I do not say that, now you have a wife, and the prospect of a family, you are strictly bound to communicate with the poor in the same proportion as formerly. I say, you are not bound; for every thing of this sort should proceed from a willing mind. But if you should tell me, the Lord has given you such a zeal for his glory, such a concern for the honour of the gospel, such a love to his members, such a grateful sense of his mercies (especially by granting you, in this late instance of your marriage, the desire of your heart), and such an affiance in his providence and promises, that you find yourself very unwilling to be one sixpence in the year less useful than you was before, I could not blame you, nor dissuade you from it. But I do not absolutely advise it; because I know not the state of your mind, or what measure of faith the Lord has given you. Only this I believe, that when the Lord gives such a confidence, he will not disappoint it.

When I look among the professors, yea, among the ministers of the gospel, there are few things I see a more general want of, than such a trust in God as to temporals, and such a sense of the honour of being permitted to relieve the necessities of his people, as might dispose them to a more liberal distribution of what they have at present in their power, and to a reliance on him for a sufficient supply in future. Some exceptions there are. Some persons I have the happiness to know, whose chief pleasure it seems to be, to devise liberal things. For the most part, we take care, first, to be well supplied, if possible, with all the necessaries, conveniencies, and not a few of the elegancies of life; then to have a snug fund laid up against a rainy day, as the phrase is (if this is in an increasing way, so much the better), that when we look at children and near relatives, we may say to our hearts, "Now they are well provided for." And when we have gotten all this, and more, we are, perhaps, content, for the love of Christ, to bestow a pittance of our superfluities, a tenth or a twentieth part of what we spend or hoard up for ourselves, upon the poor. But, alas! what do we herein more than others? Multitudes, who know nothing of the love of Christ, will do thus much, yea, perhaps, greatly exceed us, from the mere feelings of humanity.

But it may be asked, Would you show no regard to the possibility of leaving your wife or children unprovided for? Quite the reverse. I would have you attend to it very much, and behold the scriptures show you the more excellent way. If you had a little money to spare, would you not lend it to me

if I assured you it should be repaid when wanted? I can point out to you better interest and better security than I could possibly give you: Prov. xix. 17, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." What think you of this text? Is it the word of God or not? Is he worthy of belief, or not? Is he able to make good his word, or is he not? I dare stake all my interest in your friendship (which I should be very loath to forfeit), that if you act upon this maxim, in a spirit of prayer and faith, and with a single eye to his glory, you shall not be disappointed. Read over Mat. vi. 26—34. Shall we confine that reasoning and those promises to the primitive times? Say not, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, this thing might be." He has more ways to bless and prosper those who trust in him, than we are able to point out to him. But I tell you, my friend, he will sooner make windows in heaven, turn stones into bread, yea, stop the sun in his course, than he will suffer those who conscientiously serve him, and depend upon him, to be destitute.

Some instances we have had of ministers, who have seemed to transgress the bounds of strict prudence in their attention to the poor. But if they have been men of faith, prayer, and zeal; if they did it, not from a caprice of humour, or a spirit of indolence, but from such motives as the scripture suggests and recommends, I believe their families have seldom suffered for it. I wish you to consult, upon this head, what Mrs. Alleine says, in the affecting account she has given of that honoured and faithful servant of God, her hasband, Joseph Alleine. Besides, you know not what you may actually save in a course of years by this method. The apostle, speaking of some abuses that obtained in the church of Corinth, says, "For this cause many are sick among you." If prudence should shut up the bowels of your compassion (which I trust it never will), the Lord might quarter an apothecary upon your family, which would, perhaps, cost you twice the money that would have sufficed to refresh his people, and to commend your ministry and character.

But if, after all, prudence will be heard, I counsel you to do these two things. First, Be very certain that you allow yourselves in nothing superfluous. You cannot, I trust, in conscience think of laying out one penny more than is barely decent, unless you have another penny to help the poor. Then, secondly, Let your friends, who are in good circumstances, be plainly told, that, though you love them, prudence, and the necessary charge of a family, will not permit you to entertain them; no, not for a night. What! say you, shut my door against my friends? Yes, by all means, rather than against Christ. If the Lord Jesus was again upon earth in a state of humiliation, and he, and the best friend you have, standing at your door, and your provision so strait, that you could not receive both, which would you entertain? Now, he says of the poor, "Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." Your friends have houses of their own, and money to pay at an inn, if you do not take them in; but the poor need relief. One would almost think that passage, Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14, was not considered as a part of God's word; at least I believe there is no one passage so generally neglected by his own people. I do not think it unlawful to entertain our friends; but if these words do not teach us, that it is in some respects our duty to give a preference to the poor, I am at a loss to understand them.

I was enabled to set out upon the plan I recommend to you, at a time when my certain income was much too scanty for my own provision, and before I had the expectation or promise of assistance from any person upon earth. Only I knew that the Lord could provide me with whatever he saw needful; and I trusted, that if he kept me dependent upon himself, and desirous to live for his service only, he assuredly would do so. I have as yet seen no cause to repent it. I live upon his promise; for as to any present ways or means, every thing here below is so uncertain, that I consider myself in the same situation with the birds of the air, who have neither storehouse nor barn. To-day I have enough for myself, and something to impart to them that need; as to futurity, the Lord must provide; and for the most part I can believe he will. I can tell you, however, that now and then my heart is pinched; unbelief creeps in, and self would much rather choose a strong box, or what the world calls a certainty, than a life of absolute dependence upon the providence of God. However, in my composed hours I am well satisfied. Hitherto he has graciously taken care of me; therefore may my heart trust in him, and not be afraid.

Consider, my friend, the Lord has done well for you likewise. He has settled you peaceably in a good and honourable interest; he has now answered your prayers, in giving you a partner, with whom you may take sweet counsel, one that will help and strengthen you in your best desires. Beware, therefore, of that reasoning which might lead you to distrust the Lord your God, or to act as if you did. You complain that there is too much of an expensive taste among some persons in your congregation. If you set yourself to discountenance this, and should at the same time too closely shut up your hands, they will be ready to charge you with being governed by the same wordly spirit, though in another form. If you have been hitherto tender and bountiful to the poor, and should make too great and too sudden an alteration in this re-

spect, if the blame should not fall upon you, it probably would upon your wife, who, I believe, would be far from deserving it. If the house which had been open to the poor in former times, should be shut against them, now you live in it, would it not lead the people's thoughts back? Would it not open the mouths of those who do not love your ministry, to say, That, notwithstanding all your zeal about doctrines, you know how to take care of your own interest, as well as those whom you have thought indifferent and lukewarm in the cause of the gospel? Would it not? But I forbear. I know you need no such arguments. Yet consider how many eyes are upon you, watching for your halting. Now, at your first setting out, is the proper time seriously to seek the Lord's direction, that you may, from the beginning, adopt such a plan as may be most for your own comfort, the honour of your character as a minister, the glory of him who has called you, and the edification of your people. It is easier to begin well, than to make alterations afterwards. I trust the Lord will guide and bless you in your deliberations. And, for my own part, I am not in the least afraid, that you will ever have cause to blame me for the advice I have given, if you should be disposed to follow it.

I have given you my opinion freely, and perhaps with an appearance of more strictness than is necessary. But I would apply our Lord's words in another case to this: "All men cannot receive this saying; he that is able to receive it, let him receive it." If the Lord has given you this confidence in his word, you are happy. It is better than the possession of thousands by the year.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO A STUDENT IN DIVINITY.

DEAR SIR,

THE subject of your last is important. I can sympathise with your anxiety, having known much of it myself, and therefore willingly devote my first leisure to your service. But shall I indeed condole with you? or shall I rather congratulate you on the perplexity you complain of? I know it is not pleasing; but I hope it will be sanctified and profitable to you.

Though I am no enemy to the acquisition of useful knowledge, I have seen many instances of young men who have been much hurt by what they expected to reap advantage from. They have gone to the academy humble, peaceable, spiritual, and lively; but have come out self-wise, dogmatical, censorious, and full of a prudence founded upon the false maxims of the world. I have been ready to address them with that line of Milton:

"If thou art he—But ah! how fall'n!"

I do not mention this as the necessary fault of the institution, but as the frequent effect of notions too hastily picked up, when not sanctified by grace, nor balanced by a proportionable depth of spiritual experience. I am therefore glad to hear, that notwithstanding the advantages you have had in the pursuit of your studies, you feel an inward conviction, that you still need something which you cannot receive from men, or books, in order to complete your fitness for the ministry; that you may be "a workman that needs not to be ashamed," and enabled rightly to divide (to distinguish and distribute) the word of truth.

It seems to me a point of more curiosity than use, to inquire too nicely into the modus of the Holy Spirit's assistance in the composure and delivery of sermons. If we cannot exactly state the boundaries between what we may deem the result of our own thoughts, and the needful influence of the Holy Spirit, it seems a safe way to give him the honour of the whole, and to attribute nothing to ourselves but our infirmities. If we have a capacity, means for improvement, diligence to make use of those means, and if that diligence is attended with any degree of success; may we not acknowledge, that the former links of this chain are the effect of his goodness and favour, no less than the latter?

To the question, How far is it lawful to expect this assistance? I answer, It is lawful very far, even to lay the whole stress upon it, so as to be firmly persuaded that we can neither meditate nor speak to purpose without it; that if we have not this assistance, whatever else we have, or may think we have, we shall but "darken counsel by words without knowledge." For this, I think, I have warrant in John xv. 5. If any person supposes he has so far mastered a system of divinity, that though he can indeed do better with the Spirit's assistance, yet he can make a tolerable shift without it, I envy him not this attainment.

But if the question intends, How far a dependence upon the Holy Spirit may lawfully supersede the use of means? I answer, Not in the least. The blessing and the means are so closely united, that they cannot be separated. The blessing may be surely expected, if diligently sought in the use of proper means; and we have no just reason to expect it without them. But to clear up the whole, let it be considered, What may deserve the name of diligence in this matter? and what are the proper means?

By diligence, I understand spiritual diligence; such an active, improving, industrious

habit, as is peculiar to a heart impressed with some real abiding sense of the love of God, the worth of souls, the shortness of time, and the importance of eternity. Without this turn of mind, though a man should spend sixteen hours every day in his study, he may be a mere trifler. The greatest part of his application will be spent on what is least necessary, and his knowledge will chiefly prove of that sort which puffeth up, without communicating any real benefit. Gen. xli. 21. Psal. cxxvii. 2.

The chief means for attaining wisdom, and suitable gifts for the ministry, are, the holy scriptures and prayer. The one is the fountain of living water, the other the bucket with which we are to draw. And I believe you will find, by observation, that the man who is most frequent and fervent in prayer, and most devoted to the word of God, will shine and flourish above his fellows. Next to these, and derived from them, is meditation. By this I do not mean a stated exercise upon some one particular subject, so much as a disposition of mind to observe carefully what passes within us and around us; what we see, hear, and feel; and to apply all for the illustration and confirmation of the written word to us. In the use of these means, and an humble dependence upon the Lord in all the changing dispensations we pass through, our spiritual experience will enlarge; and this experience is the proper fund of our ministerial capacity, so far as it may be considered inherent in us. Prov. xvi. 23. Mat. xiii. 52. 1 John i. 3.

These means are of universal importance. The wisest can do nothing without them; the weakest shall not use them in vain. There are likewise subordinate means, which may be helpful, and should in general be attended to. Yet they ough. not, I apprehend, to be considered as a *sine qua non* in a minister's call and fitness. The first preachers had them not, and some in the present day are enabled to do well without them. Under this head, I principally intend all that comes under the usual denomination of literature. A competent acquaintance with the learned languages, history, natural philosophy, &c. is very desirable. If these things are held in a proper subserviency, if they do not engross too much of our time, nor add fuel to the fire of that self-importance which is our great snare, they may contribute to increase and enlarge our ideas, and facilitate our expressing ourselves with propriety. But these attainments, like riches, are attended with their peculiar temptations; and unless they are under the regulation of a sound judgment, and spiritual frame of mind, will prove, like Saul's armour to David, rather cumbersome than useful in preaching. The sermons of preachers thus qualified are often more ingenious than edifying, and rather set off the man, than commend the gospel of Christ.

As you desire my advice with respect to your future studies, I shall comply, without hesitation or ceremony.

The original scriptures well deserve your pains, and will richly repay them. There is, doubtless, a beauty, fulness, and spirit, in the originals, which the best translations do not always express. When a word or phrase admits of various senses, the translators can only preserve one; and it is not to be supposed, unless they were perfectly under the influence of the same infallible Spirit, that they should always prefer the best. Only be upon your guard, lest you should be tempted to think, that because you are master of the grammatical construction, and can tell the several acceptations of the words in the best authors, you are therefore and thereby master of the spiritual sense likewise. This you must derive from your experimental knowledge, and the influence and teaching of the Spirit of God.

Another thing which will much assist you in composing, and speaking properly and acceptably, is logic. This will teach you what properly belongs to your subject, and what may be best suppressed; and likewise to explain, divide, enumerate, and range your ideas to advantage. A lax, immethodical, disproportionate manner is to be avoided; yet beware of the contrary extreme. An affected starchness and over-accuracy will fetter you, will make your discourse lean and dry, preclude an useful variety, and savour more of the school-lamp, than of that heavenly fire, which alone can make our meditations efficacious, and profitable either to ourselves or our hearers. The proper medium can hardly be taught by rule; experience, observation, and prayer, are the best guides.

As your inquiry seems chiefly to be, How to fill up your outlines? I would advise you to study the living, as well as the dead, or rather more. Converse much with experienced christians, and exercised souls. You will find advantage in this respect, not only from the wise, but from the weak of the flock. In the course of your acquaintance, you will meet with some in a backsliding state, some under temptations, some walking in darkness, others rejoicing in the light, &c. Observe how their spirits work, what they say, and how they reason in their several cases; what methods and arguments you find most successful in comforting the feeble-minded, raising up those who are cast down, and the like; and what answers they return. Compare these with the word of God, and your own heart. What you observe of ten persons in these different situations, may be applied to ten thousand. For though some circumstances vary, the heart of man, the aids of grace, and the artifices of

Satan, in general, are universally the same. And whenever you are to preach, remember that some of all these sorts will probably be before you, and each should have something said to their own peculiar case.

The tempted and distressed will be most probably relieved, by opening the various states and exercises of the heart, and by showing, from scriptural and other examples, that no new thing has befallen them. The careless and backsliders, who have made a profession, should be reminded of that blessedness they once spoke of, and warned of their danger. Those who are now upon the mount should be cautioned to expect a change, and to guard against security and spiritual pride. To the dead in trespasses and sins (some such will be always present), it is needful to preach the spirituality and sanction of the law, that they may be stirred up to seek Jesus. Of him all awakened souls love to hear much. Let him, therefore, be your capital subject. If you discuss some less essential topic, or bend all your strength to clear up some dark text, though you should display much learning and ingenuity, you will probably fall short of your main design, which, I dare say, will be to promote the glory of God, and the good of souls.

You will likewise find advantage, by attending as much as you can on those preachers, whom God has blessed with much power, life, and success in their ministry; and in this you will do well not to confine yourself to any denomination or party; for the Spirit of the Lord is not confined. Different men have different gifts and talents. I would not wish you to be a slavish admirer of any man. Christ alone is our Master and Teacher. But study the excellencies of each; and if you observe a fault in any (for no human models are perfect), you will see what you are yourself to avoid.

Your inquiries respecting my own experience on this subject, must be answered very briefly. I have long since learned, that if I was ever to be a minister, faith and prayer must make me one. I desire to seek the Lord's direction, both in the choice and management of subjects; but I do not expect it in a way of extraordinary impulse, but in endeavouring to avail myself, to the best of my judgment, of present circumstances. The converse I have with my people usually suggests what I am to preach to them. At first, my chief solicitude used to be, what I should find to say; I hope it is now, rather that I may not speak in vain. For the Lord has sent me here, not to acquire the character of a ready speaker, but to win souls to Christ, and to edify his people. As to preparation, I make little use of books, excepting the Bible and Concordance. Though I preach without notes, I must frequently write more or less upon the subject. Often, when I begin, I am at a loss how I shall proceed; but one thing insensibly offers after another, and, in general, I believe, the best and most useful parts of my sermon occur *de novo*, while I am preaching. This reminds me of Luther's maxim, "*Bene precâsse est bene studuisse.*" When I can find my heart in frame and liberty for prayer, every thing else is comparatively easy.

I should be very glad if any thing I have offered may afford you satisfaction. The sum of my advice is this: Examine your heart and views. Can you appeal to him who knows all things concerning the sincerity of your aim, that you devote yourself to the work of the ministry, not for worldly regards, but with an humble desire to promote the Redeemer's kingdom. If so, and his providence has thus far concurred with you, trust him for your sufficiency of every kind, and he will not disappoint you, but will be near to strengthen you according to your day. Depend not upon any cisterns you can hew out for yourself, but rejoice that you have liberty to come to the fountain that is always full, and always flowing. You must not expect a mechanical sufficiency, such as artificers acquire by habit and exercise in their business. When you have preached well nineteen times, this will be no security for the twentieth. Yea, when you have been upheld for twenty years, should the Lord with-hold his hand, you would be as much at a loss as at first.

If you lean upon books or men, or upon your own faculties and attainments, you will be in fear and in danger of falling continually. But if you stay yourself upon the Lord, he will not only make good your expectations, but in time will give you a becoming confidence in his goodness, and free you from your present anxiety.

One thing more I must mention as belonging to the subject: That a comfortable freedom for public service depends much upon the spirituality of our walk before God and man. Wisdom will not dwell with a trifling, an assuming, a censorious, or a worldly spirit. But if it is our business, and our pleasure, to contemplate Jesus, and to walk in his steps, he will bless us; we shall be like trees planted by a constant stream, and he will prosper the work of our hands.

I am, &c

LETTER III.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND, ON THE QUESTION, WHETHER THE SINS OF BELIEVERS SHALL BE PUBLICLY DECLARED AT THE GREAT DAY? OR, HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THE APOSTLE'S ASSERTION, "WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF CHRIST; THAT EVERY ONE MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS DONE IN HIS BODY, ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH DONE, WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR BAD?" 2 COR. V. 10, COMPARED WITH ROM. XIV. 12.

MY DEAR SIR,

My heart congratulates you. What changes and events many, in younger life, may be reserved to see, who can tell? But your pilgrimage is nearly finished; you stand upon the river's brink, with the city full in view, waiting and wishing for the appointed hour. You need not be anxious concerning your passage; for every circumstance attending it is already adjusted by infinite wisdom and love, and the King himself will be ready to receive you. While you continue here, I am glad to hear from you, and should be glad to contribute in any way or degree to your satisfaction, or even to shew my willingness, if I can do no more. I can propose little more than the latter, by offering my thoughts on the subject you propose from 2 Cor. v. 10, and the apparent difficulty of understanding that passage, in full harmony with the many texts which seem expressly to assert, that the sins of believers are so forgiven as to be remembered no more.

There is doubtless, as you observe, a perfect consistence in every part of the word of God; the difficulties we meet with are wholly owing to the narrowness of our faculties, and the ignorance which, in some degree, is inseparable from our present state of imperfection. And we may, in general, rest satisfied with the thought, that there is a bright moment approaching, when the veil shall be wholly taken away. It is the part of faith to rest upon the plain declarations of scripture, without indulging a blameable curiosity of knowing more than is clearly revealed; yet, while we humbly depend upon divine teaching, it is right to aim at as enlarged a sense of what is revealed as we can attain to. Every acquisition of this kind is more valuable than gold, especially respecting those points which have an immediate tendency to comfort and support us under the view of an approaching dissolution. The question you have proposed is undoubtedly of this nature.

May the Lord direct my thoughts and pen, that I may not "darken counsel by words without knowledge!" I have been looking over the passage you refer to in Dr. Ridgley, and think I might be well excused from saying any thing further on the subject, as he hath briefly and fully stated all the arguments that have occured to me on either side of the question, and closes with a proper caution not to be peremptory in determining, lest by attempting to be wise above what is written, I should betray my own folly. Yet, as you desire to have my thoughts, I must say something. I wish I may not give you reason to think that this caution has been lost upon me.

I think all the great truths in which we are concerned, are clearly, and expressly laid down, not only in one, but in many places of scripture; but it sometimes happens, that here and there we meet with a text, which, in the first and obvious sound of the words, seems to speak differently from what is asserted more largely elsewhere; which texts, singly taken, afford some men their only ground for the hypothesis they maintain. Thus the Arians lay a great stress on John xiv. 28, and the Arminians on James ii. 24, &c. But their true interpretation is to be sought according to the analogy of faith. They are capable of a sense agreeable to the others, though the others are not intelligible in the sense they would fix upon these. In like manner, I would say, whatever may be the precise meaning of 2 Cor. v. 10, we are sure it cannot be designed to weaken what we are taught in almost every page, of the free, absolute, and unalterable nature of a believer's justification; the benefit of which, as to the forgiveness of sin, is signified by the phrases of "blotting out,"—"not remembering,"—"casting behind the back,"—and "into the depths of the sea." The sins of a believer are so effectually removed, that even when, or if they are sought for, they cannot be found; for Jesus has borne them away: believers are complete in him, and clothed in his righteousness. They shall stand before God without spot or wrinkle. Who shall lay any thing to their charge?

But it is probable that those stray expressions chiefly, if not entirely, respect the guilt, imputation, and deserved consequences of sin. ——None can suppose that the Lord will, or can forget the sins of his people, or that they can ever be hid from his all-comprehending view. Neither can I think they themselves will forget them. Their song is founded upon a recollection of their sins and their circumstances in this life, Rev. v. 9; and their love, and consequently, their happiness, seems inseparably connected with the consciousness of what they were, and what they had done, Luke vii. 47. And I think those are the sweetest moments in this life, when we have the clearest sense of our own sins, provided the sense of our acceptance in the Beloved is proportionably clear, and we feel the consolations of his love, notwithstanding all our transgressions. When we arrive in glory, unbelief and fear will cease for ever; our nearness to

God, and communion with him, will be unspeakable beyond what we can now conceive. Therefore, the remembrance of our sins will be no abatement of our bliss, but rather the contrary. When Pharaoh and his host were alive, and pursuing them, the Israelites were terrified; but afterwards, when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, their joy and triumph were not abated, but heightened, by the consideration of their number.

With respect to our sins being made known to others, I acknowledge with you, that I could not now bear to have any of my fellow-creatures made acquainted with what passes in my heart for a single day; but, I apprehend it is a part, and a proof of my present depravity, that I feel myself disposed to pay so great a regard to the judgment of men, while I am so little affected with what I am in the sight of a pure and holy God. But I believe that hereafter, when self shall be entirely rooted out, and my will perfectly united to the divine will, I should feel no reluctance, supposing it for the manifestation of his glorious grace, that men, angels, and devils, should know the very worst of me. Whether it will be so or no, I dare not determine. Perhaps the difficulty chiefly lies in the necessity of our being at present taught heavenly things by earthly. In the descriptions we have of the great day, allusion is made to what is most solemn in human transactions. The ideas of the judgment-seat, the great trumpet, of the books being opened, and the pleadings, Matth. xxv. 37—44, seem to be borrowed from the customs that obtain amongst men, to help our weak conceptions, rather than justly and fully to describe what will be the real process. Now, when we attempt to look into the unseen world, we carry our ideas of time and place, and sensible objects, along with us; and we cannot divest ourselves of them, or provide ourselves with better: yet, perhaps, they have as little relation to the objects we aim at, as the ideas which a man born blind acquires from what he hears and feels, have to the true nature of light and colours. Mr. Locke mentions one, who, after much thought and conversation, supposed he had got a tolerable notion of scarlet, and that it was something nearly resembling the sound of a trumpet. Perhaps, this is no improper emblem of the utmost we can attain to, when we are endeavouring to

lize the solemnities of the judgment-day.
hat me mean by memory and reasoning,
y possibly have no place in the world of
irits. We guess at something more suit-
, perhaps, when we use the term intuition.
I apprehend we must die before we can
y understand what it signifies: perhaps,
ights may be as intelligible there as words
here.

In a word, my dear Sir, if I have not given
satisfaction (I am sure I have not satisfied myself), accept my apology in the words of a much wiser, and an inspired man: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Ere long we shall know: in the mean while our cause is in sure hands, we have a Shepherd who will guide us below, an Advocate who will receive and present us before the throne above. I trust we meet daily before the throne of grace, hereafter we shall meet in glory. The paper will allow no more. Believe me yours in the Lord, &c.

LETTER IV.

TO THERON, ON FAMILY-WORSHIP.

SIR,

A NEGLECT of family-prayer is, I am afraid, too common amongst professors in this day. I am glad that you consider it both as a duty and a privilege, and are by grace determined, that when you shall commence master of a family, you will worship God with all your house. It was Abraham's commendation, that he not only served the Lord himself, but was solicitous that his children and household might serve him likewise. I trust that he who inclines your heart to walk in the footsteps of faithful Abraham will bless you in the attempt, and give you peace in your dwelling; a mercy which is seldom enjoyed, which, indeed, can hardly be expected, by those families which call not upon the Lord.

Though I readily comply with your request, and should be glad if I can offer any thing that may assist or animate you in your good purpose; I am afraid I shall not answer your expectations with regard to the particulars of your inquiry, concerning the most proper method of conducting family-worship. The circumstances of families are so various, that no determinate rules can be laid down, nor has the word of God prescribed any; because, being of universal obligation, it is wisely and graciously accommodated to suit the different situations of his people. You must, therefore, as to circumstantials, judge for yourself. You will do well to pursue such a method as you shall find most convenient to yourself and family, without scrupulously binding yourself, when the scripture has left you free.

We have no positive precept enjoining us any set time for prayer, nor even how often we should pray, either in public or private; though the expressions of, "continuing instant in prayer," "praying without ceasing," and the like, plainly intimate that prayer should be frequent. Daniel prayed three times a-day; which the Psalmist speaks of as his practice likewise; and in one place declares his purpose of praising God seven times a-day. This last expression is perhaps, inde-

finite, not precisely seven times, but very often. Indeed, a person who lives in the exercise of faith and love, and who finds, by experience, that it is good for him to draw nigh to God, will not want to be told how often he must pray, any more than how often he must converse with an earthly friend. Those whom we love, we love to be much with. Love is the best casuist, and either resolves or prevents a thousand scruples and questions, which may perplex those who only serve God from principles of constraint and fear. And a believer will account those his happiest days, when he has most leisure, and most liberty of spirit, for the exercise of prayer. However, I think family-prayer cannot be said to be stated, unless it be performed at least daily, and, when unavoidable hinderances do not prevent, twice a-day. Though all times and seasons are alike to the Lord, and his ear is always open, whenever we have a heart to call upon him; yet to us there is a peculiar suitableness in beginning and closing the day with prayer: in the morning, to acknowledge his goodness in our preservation through the night, and entreat his presence and blessing on our persons and callings in the course of the day; and at night, to praise him for the mercies of the day past, to humble ourselves before him for what has been amiss, to wait on him for a renewed manifestation of his pardoning love, and to commit ourselves and our concerns to his care and protection while we sleep. You will of course chuse those hours when you are least liable to be incommoded by the calls of business, and when the family can assemble with the most convenience; only I would observe, that it greatly preserves regularity and good order in a house, to keep constantly to the same hours when it is practicable; and likewise, that it is best not to defer evening-prayer till late, if it can be well avoided, lest some who join in the exercise, and perhaps the person himself who leads in it, should be too weary or sleepy to give a due attention. On this account, I should advise to have family-prayer before supper, where people have the choice and disposal of their own hours.

I think, with you, that it is very expedient and proper that reading a portion of the word of God should be ordinarily a part of our family-worship; so likewise, to sing a hymn or psalm, or part of one, at discretion, provided there are some persons in the family who have enough of a musical ear and voice to conduct the singing in a tolerable manner; otherwise, perhaps, it may be better omitted. If you read and sing, as well as pray, care should be taken that the combined services do not run into an inconvenient length.

The chief thing to be attended to is, that it may be a spiritual service; and the great evil to be dreaded and guarded against in the exercise of every duty that returns frequently upon us, is formality. If a stated course of family-prayer is kept up as constantly in its season as the striking of the clock, it may come in time to be almost as mechanically performed, unless we are continually looking to the Lord to keep our hearts alive. It most frequently happens, that one or more members of a family are unconverted persons. When there are such present a great regard should be had to them, and every thing conducted with a view to their edification, that they may not be disgusted, or wearied, or tempted, to think that it is little more than the fashion or custom of the house; which will probably be the case, unless the master of the family is lively and earnest in the performance of the duty, and likewise circumspect and consistent in every part of his behaviour at other times. By leading in the worship of God before children, servants, or strangers, a man gives bond, as it were, for his behaviour, and adds strength to every other motive which should engage him to abstain from all appearance of evil. It should be a constant check upon our language and tempers in the presence of our families, to consider that we began the day, and propose to end it with them in prayer. The Apostle Peter uses this argument to influence the conduct of husbands and wives towards each other; and it is equally applicable to all the members of a family; "That your prayers be not hindered:" that is, either prevented and cut off, or despoiled of all life and efficacy, by the ferment of sinful passions. On the other hand, the proper exercise of family-prayer, when recommended by a suitable deportment, is a happy means of instructing children and servants in the great truths of religion, of softening their prejudices, and inspiring them with a temper of respect and affection, which will dispose them to cheerful obedience, and make them unwilling to grieve or offend. In this instance, as in every other, we may observe, that the Lord's commands to his people are not arbitrary appointments, but that, so far as they are conscientiously complied with, they have an evident tendency and suitableness to promote our own advantage. He requires us to acknowledge him in our families, for our own sakes; not because he has need of our poor services, but because we have need of his blessing, and without the influence of his grace (which is promised to all who seek it) are sure to be unhappy in ourselves and in all our connections.

When husband and wife are happily partakers of the same faith, it seems expedient, and for their mutual good, that besides their private devotions, and joining in family-prayer, they should pray together. They have many wants, mercies, and concerns, in common with each other, and distinct from the rest of the family. The manner in which they should improve a little time in this joint exercise cannot well be prescribed by a third person; yet

I will venture to suggest one thing; and the rather, as I do not remember to have met with it in print. I conceive that it may prove much to their comfort to pray alternately, not only the husband with and for the wife, but the wife with and for the husband. The Spirit of God by the apostle, has expressly restrained women from the exercise of spiritual gifts in public, but I apprehend the practice I am speaking of can no way interfere with that restriction. I suppose them in private together, and then I judge it to be equally right and proper for either of them to pray with the other. Nor do I meet with any thing in St Paul's writings to prevent my thinking, that if he had been a married man, he would, though an apostle, have been glad of the prayers of his wife. If you ask, how often they should pray together? I think the oftener the better, provided it does not break in upon their duties; once a-day at least; and if there is a choice of hours, it might be as well at some distance from their other seasons of worship. But I would observe, as before, that in matters not expressly commanded, prudence and experience must direct.

I have written upon the supposition that you use extempore prayer; but as there are many heads of families who fear the Lord, and have not yet attained liberty to pray extempore before others, I would add, that their inability in this respect, whether real, or whether only proceeding from fear, and an undue regard to self, will not justify them in the omission of family-prayer. Helps may be procured. Mr. Jenk's Devotions are in many hands, and I doubt not but there are other excellent books of the same kind, with which I am not acquainted. If they begin with a form, not with a design to confine themselves always to one, but make it a part of their secret pleading at the throne of grace, that they may be favoured with the gift and spirit of prayer; and accustom themselves while they use a form, to intersperse some petitions of their own; there is little doubt but they will in time find a growth in liberty and ability, and at length lay their book entirely aside. For it being every believer's duty to worship God in his family, his promise may be depended upon, to give them a sufficiency in all things, for those services which he requires of them.

Happy is that family where the worship of God is constantly and conscientiously maintained. Such houses are temples, in which Lord dwells, and castles garrisoned by a ine power. I do not say, that, by honour- God in your house, you will wholly es- e a share in the trials incident to the pre- t uncertain state of things. A measure of h trials will be necessary for the exercise l manifestation of your graces, to give you a e convincing proof of the truth and sweet- of the promises made to a time of afflic- to mortify the body of sin and to wean you more effectually from the world. But this I will confidently say, that the Lord will both honour and comfort those who thus honour him. Seasons will occur in which you shall know, and probably your neighbours shall be constrained to take notice, that he has not bid you seek him in vain. If you meet with troubles, they shall be accompanied by supports, and followed by deliverance; and you shall upon many occasions experience, that he is your protector, preserving you and yours from the evils by which you will see others suffering around you.

I have rather exceeded the limits I proposed, and therefore shall only add a request, that in your addresses at the throne of grace you will remember, &c.

LETTER V.

ON THE SNARES AND DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

DEAR SIR,

I AM glad to hear that you are ordained, and that the Lord is about to fix you in a place where there is a prospect of your being greatly useful. He has given you the desire of your heart; and I hope he has given you likewise a heart to devote yourself, without reserve, to his service, and the service of souls for his sake. I willingly comply with your request; and shall without ceremony, offer you such thoughts as occur to me upon this occasion.

You have, doubtless, often anticipated in your mind the nature of the service to which you are now called, and made it the subject of much consideration and prayer. But a distant view of the ministry is generally very different from what it is found to be when we are actually engaged in it. The young soldier, who has never seen an enemy, may form some general notions of what is before him; but his ideas will be much more lively and diversified when he comes upon the field of battle. If the Lord was to shew us the whole before hand, who that has a due sense of his own insufficiency and weakness, would venture to engage? But he first draws us by a constraining sense of his love, and by giving us an impression of the worth of souls, and leaves us to acquire a knowledge of what is difficult and disagreeable by a gradual experience. The ministry of the gospel, like the book which the apostle John ate, is a bitter sweet; but the sweetness is tasted first, the bitterness is usually known afterwards when we are so far engaged that there is no going back.

Yet I would not discourage you; it is a good and noble cause, and we serve a good and gracious Master; who, though he will

make us feel our weakness and vileness, will not suffer us to sink under it. His grace is sufficient for us; and if he favours us with an humble and dependant spirit, a single eye and a simple heart, he will make every difficulty give way, and mountains will sink into plains before his power.

You have known something of Satan's devices while you were in private life: how he has envied your privileges, assaulted your peace, and laid snares for your feet: though the Lord would not suffer him to hurt you, he has permitted him to sift and tempt, and shoot his fiery arrows at you. Without some of this discipline, you would have been very unfit for that part of your office which consists in speaking a word in season to weary and heavy-laden souls. But you may now expect to hear from him, and to be beset by his power and subtilty in a different manner. You are now to be placed in the forefront of the battle, and to stand as it were, for his mark: so far as he can prevail against you now, not yourself only, but many others, will be affected: many eyes will be upon you; and if you take a wrong step, or are ensnared into a wrong spirit, you will open the mouths of the adversaries wider, and grieve the hearts of believers more sensibly than if the same things had happened to you while you was a layman. The work of the ministry is truly honourable; but, like the post of honour in a battle, it is attended with peculiar dangers; therefore the apostle cautions Timothy, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine." To thyself in the first place, and then to thy doctrine; the latter without the former would be impracticable and vain.

You have need to be upon your guard in whatever way your first attempts to preach the gospel may seem to operate. If you should (as may probably be the case, where the truth has been little known) meet with much opposition, you will perhaps find it a heavier trial than you are aware of; but I speak of it only as it might draw forth your corruptions, and give Satan advantage against you, and this may be two ways: first, by embittering your spirit against opposers, so as to speak in anger, to set them at defiance, or retaliate upon them in their own way; which, besides bringing guilt upon your conscience, would of course increase your difficulties, and impede your usefulness. A violent opposition against ministers and professors of the gospel is sometimes expressed by the devil's roaring, and some people think no good can be done without it. It is allowed, that men who love darkness will shew their dislike of the light; but, I believe, if the wisdom and meekness of the friends of the gospel had been always equal to their good intentions and zeal, the devil would not have had opportunity of roaring so loud as he has sometimes done. The subject-matter of the gospel is offence enough to the carnal heart; we must therefore expect opposition; but we should not provoke or despise it, or do any thing to aggravate it. A patient continuance in well-doing, a consistency in character, and an attention to return kind offices for hard treatment, will, in course of time, greatly soften the spirit of opposition; and instances are to be found of ministers, who are treated with some respect, even by those persons in their parishes who are most averse to their doctrine. When the apostle directs us, "If it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men," he seems to intimate, that though it be difficult, it is not wholly impractible. We cannot change the rooted prejudices of their hearts against the gospel; but it is possible, by the Lord's blessing, to stop their mouths and make them ashamed of discovering it, when they behold our good conversation in Christ. And it is well worth our while to cultivate this outward peace, provided we do not purchase it at the expense of truth and faithfulness; for ordinarily we cannot hope to be useful to our people, unless we give them reason to believe that we love them, and have their interest at heart. Again, opposition will hurt you, if it should give you an idea of your own importance, and lead you to dwell with a secret self-approbation upon your own faithfulness and courage in such circumstances. If you are able to stand your ground uninfluenced either by the favour or the fear of men, you have reason to give glory to God; but remember, that you cannot thus stand an hour, unless he upholds you. It shews a strong turn of mind, when we are very ready to speak of our trials and difficultics of this kind, and of our address and resolution in encountering them. A natural stiffness of spirit, with a desire to have self taken notice of, may make a man willing to endure those kind of hardships, though he has but little grace in exercise; but true christian fortitude, from a consciousness that we speak the truths of God, and are supported by his power is a very different thing.

If you should meet with but little opposition, or if the Lord should be pleased to make your enemies your friends, you will probably be in danger from the opposite quarter. If opposition has hurt many, popularity has wounded more. To say the truth, I am in some pain for you. Your natural abilities are considerable; you have been diligent in your studies; your zeal is warm, and your spirit is lively. With these advantages, I expect to see you a popular preacher. The more you are so, the greater will your field of usefulness be: but, alas! you cannot yet know to what it will expose you. (It is like walking upon ice.) When you shall see an attentive congregation hanging upon your words; when you shall hear the well-meant, but often injudicious, commendations of those to whom the Lord shall make you useful; when you

shall find, upon an intimation of your preaching in a strange place, people thronging from all parts to hear you, how will your heart feel? It is easy for me to advise you to be humble, and for you to acknowledge the propriety of the advice; but while human nature remains in its present state, there will be almost the same connection between popularity and pride, as between fire and gunpowder; they cannot meet without an explosion, at least, not unless the gunpowder is kept very damp. So unless the Lord is constantly moistening our hearts (if I may so speak) by the influences of his Spirit, popularity will soon set us in a blaze. You will hardly find a person, who has been exposed to this fiery trial, without suffering loss. Those whom the Lord loves, he is able to keep, and he will keep them upon the whole; yet by such means, and in a course of such narrow escapes, that they shall have reason to look upon their deliverance as no less than miraculous. Sometimes, if his ministers are not watchful against the first impressions of pride, he permits it to gather strength; and then it is but a small thing, that a few of their admirers may think them more than men in the pulpit, if they are left to commit such mistakes when out of it, as the weakest of the flock can discover and pity. And this will certainly be the case, while pride and self-sufficiency have the ascendant. Beware, my friend, of mistaking the ready exercise of gifts for the exercise of grace. The minister may be assisted in public for the sake of his hearers; and there is something in the nature of our publiic work, when surrounded by a concourse of people, that is suited to draw forth the exertion of our abilities, and to engage our attention in the outward services, when the frame of the heart may be far from being right in the sight of the Lord. When Moses smote the rock, the water followed; yet he spoke unadvisedly with his lips, and greatly displeased the Lord. However, the congregation was not disappointed for his fault, nor was he put to shame before them; but he was humbled for it afterwards. They are happy whom the Lord preserves in some degree humble, without leaving them to expose themselves to the observation of men, and to receive such wounds as are seldom healed without leaving a deep scar. But even these have much to suffer. Many distressing exercises you will probably meet with, upon the best pposition, to preserve in you a due sense of ur own unworthiness, and to convince you, at your ability, your acceptance, and your efulness, depend upon a power beyond your rn. Sometimes, perhaps, you will feel such amazing difference between the frame of ur spirit in public and in private, when the yes of men are not upon you, as will make n almost ready to conclude, that you are no tter than a hypocrite, a mere stage-player, o derives all his pathos and exertion from the sight of the audience. At other times, you will find such a total emptiness and indisposition of mind, that former seasons of liberty in preaching will appear to you like the remembrance of a dream, and you will hardly be able to persuade yourself, you shall ever be capable of preaching again; the scriptures will appear to you like a sealed book, and no text or subject afford any light or opening to determine your choice; and this perplexity may not only seize you in the study, but accompany you to the pulpit. If you are enabled at some times to speak to the people with power, and to resemble Samson, when, in the greatness of his strength, he bore away the gates of the city, you will, perhaps, at others, appear before them like Samson, when his locks were shorn, and he stood in fetters. So that you need not tell the people you have no sufficiency in yourself; for they will readily perceive it without your information. These things are hard to bear; yet successful popularity is not to be preserved upon easier terms; and if they are but sanctified to hide pride from you, you will have reason to number them amongst your choicest mercies.

I have but just made an entrance upon the subject of the difficulties and dangers attending the ministry. But my paper is full. If you are willing I should proceed, let me know, and I believe I can easily find enough to fill another sheet. May the Lord make you wise and watchful! That he may be the light of your eye, the strength of your arm, and the joy of your heart, is the sincere prayer of, &c.

LETTER VI.

ON THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF FAITH.

SIR,

THE use and importance of faith, as it respects a sinner's justification before God, has been largely insisted on; but it is likewise of great use and importance in the daily concerns of life. It gives evidence and subsistence to things not seen, and realizes the great truths of the gospel, so as that they become abiding and living principles of support and direction, while we are passing through this wilderness. Thus, it is as the eye and the hand, without which we cannot take one step with certainty, or attempt any service with success. It is to be wished, that this practical exercise of faith were duly attended to by all professors. We should not then meet with so many cases that put us to a stand, and leave us at a great difficulty to reconcile, what we see in some, of whom we would willingly hope well, with what we read in scripture, of the inseparable concomitants of a true and lively faith. For how can we but be staggered, when we hear

persons speaking the language of assurance, that they know their acceptance with God through Christ, and have not the least doubt of their interest in all the promises; while, at the same time, we see them under the influence of unsanctified tempers, of a proud, passionate, positive, worldly, selfish, or churlish carriage?

It is not only plain from the general tenure of scripture, that a covetous, a proud, or a censorious spirit, are no more consistent with the spirit of the gospel, than drunkenness or whoredom; but there are many express texts directly pointed against the evils which too often are found amongst professors. Thus the apostle James assures us, "That if any man seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain;" and the apostle John, "That if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and he seems to apply this character to any man, whatever his profession or pretences may be, "who having this world's goods, and seeing his brother have need, shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him." Surely these texts more than intimate, that the faith which justifies the soul, does likewise receive from Jesus grace for grace, whereby the heart is purified, and the conversation regulated as becomes the gospel of Christ.

There are too many who would have the ministry of the gospel restrained to the privileges of believers; and when the fruits of faith, and the tempers of the mind, which should be manifest in those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," are inculcated, think they sufficiently evade all that is said, by calling it legal preaching. I would be no advocate for legal preaching; but we must not be deterred by the fear of a hard word, from declaring the whole counsel of God; and we have the authority and example of St. Paul, who was a champion of the doctrines of free grace, to animate us in exhorting professors to "walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory." And indeed the expression of a believer's privilege is often misunderstood. It is a believer's privilege to walk with God in the exercise of faith, and, by the power of his Spirit, to mortify the whole body of sin; to gain a growing victory over the world and self, and to make daily advances in conformity to the mind that was in Christ. And nothing that we profess to know, believe, or hope for, deserves the name of a privilege, farther than we are influenced by it to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness. Whosoever is possessed of true faith, will not confine his inquiries to the single point of his acceptance with God, or be satisfied with the distant hope of heaven hereafter. He will likewise be solicitous how he may glorify God in the world, and enjoy such foretastes of heaven as are attainable while he is yet upon earth.

Faith, then, in its practical exercise, has for its object the whole word of God, and forms its estimate of all things with which the soul is at present concerned, according to the standard of scripture. Like Moses, it "endures, as seeing him who is invisible." When our Lord was upon earth, and conversed with his disciples, their eyes and hearts were fixed upon him. In danger he was their defender; their guide when in perplexity; and to him they looked for the solution of all their doubts, and the supply of all their wants. He is now withdrawn from our eyes; bu faith sets him still before us for the same purposes, and, according to its degree, with the same effects, as if we actually saw him. His spiritual presence, apprehended by faith, is a restraint from evil, an encouragement to every service, and affords a present refuge and help in every time of trouble. To this is owing the delight a believer takes in ordinances, because there he meets his Lord; and to this likewise it is owing, that his religion is not confined to public occasions; but he is the same person in secret as he appears to be in the public assembly; for he worships him who sees in secret, and dares appeal to his all-seeing eye for the sincerity of his desires and intentions. By faith he is enabled to use prosperity with moderation; and knows and feels, that what the world calls good is of small value, unless it is accompanied with the presence and blessing of Him whom his soul loveth. And his faith upholds him under all trials, by assuring him that every dispensation is under the direction of his Lord; that chastisements are a token of his love; that the season, measure, and continuance of his sufferings, are appointed by infinite wisdom, and designed to work for his everlasting good; and that grace and strength shall be afforded him, according to his day. Thus, his heart being fixed, trusting in the Lord, to whom he has committed all his concerns, and knowing that his best interests are safe, he is not greatly afraid of evil tidings, but enjoys a stable peace in the midst of a changing world. For though he cannot tell what a day may bring forth, he believes that He, who has invited and enabled him to cast all his cares upon him, will suffer nothing to befall him but what shall be made subservient to his chief desires, the glory of God, in the sanctification and final salvation of his soul. And if, through the weakness of his flesh, he is liable to be startled by the first impression of a sharp and sudden trial, he quickly flees to his strong refuge, remembers it is the Lord's doing, resigns himself to his will, and patiently expects a happy issue.

By the same principle of faith, a believer's conduct is regulated towards his fellow-creatures; and in the discharge of the several duties and relations of life, his great aim is to please God, and to let his light shine in the

world. He believes and feels his own weakness and unworthiness, and lives upon the grace and pardoning love of his Lord. This gives him an habitual tenderness and gentleness of spirit. Humbled under a sense of much forgiveness to himself, he finds it easy to forgive others, if he has ought against any. A due sense of what he is in the sight of the Lord, preserves him from giving way to anger, positiveness, and resentment. He is not easily provoked, but is "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;" and if offended, easy to be intreated, and disposed, not only to yield to a reconciliation, but to seek it. As Jesus is his life, and righteousness, and strength, so he is his pattern. By faith he contemplates and studies this great exemplar of philanthropy. With a holy ambition, he treads in the footsteps of his Lord and Master, and learns of him to be meek and lowly, to requite injuries with kindness, and to overcome evil with good. From the same views, by faith he derives a benevolent spirit, and, according to his sphere and ability, he endeavours to promote the welfare of all around him. The law of love being thus written in his heart, and his soul set at liberty from the low and narrow dictates of a selfish spirit, his language will be truth, and his dealings equity His promise may be depended on, without the interposition of an oath, bond, or witness; and the feelings of his own heart, under the direction of an enlightened conscience, and the precepts of scripture, prompt him to do unto others as he would desire they, in the like circumscances, should do unto him. If he is a master, he is gentle and compassionate; if a servant, he is faithful and obedient; for in either relation he acts by faith, under the eye of his Master in heaven. If he is a trader, he neither dares nor wishes to take advantage, either of the ignorance or the necessities of those with whom he deals. And the same principle of love influences his whole conversation. A sense of his own infirmities makes him candid to those of others. He will not readily believe reports to their prejudice, without sufficient proof; and even then, he will not repeat them, unless he is lawfully called to it. He believes that the precept, "Speak evil of no man," is founded upon the same authority with those which forbid committing adultery or murder, and therefore he "keeps his tongue as with a bridle."

Lastly, faith is of daily use as a preservative from a compliance with the corrupt customs and maxims of the world. The believer, though *in* the world, is not *of* it. By faith he triumphs over its smiles and enticements; he sees that all that is in the world, suited to gratify the desires of the flesh or the eye, is not only to be avoided as sinful, but as incompatible with his best pleasures. He will mix with the world so far as is necessary, in the discharge of the duties of that station of life in which the providence of God has placed him, but no farther. His leisure and inclinations are engaged in a different pursuit. They who fear the Lord are his chosen companions; and the blessings he derives from the word, and throne, and ordinances of grace, make him look upon the poor pleasures and amusements of those who live without God in the world with a mixture of disdain and pity; and by faith he is proof against its frowns. He will obey God rather than man. He will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but will rather reprove them." And if, upon this account, he should be despised and injuriously treated, whatever loss he suffers in such a cause, he accounts his gain, and esteems such disgrace his glory.

I am not aiming to draw a perfect character, but to shew the proper effects of that faith which justifies, which purifies the heart, which worketh by love, and overcomes the world. An habitual endeavour to possess such a frame of spirit, and thus to adorn the gospel of Christ, and that with growing success, is what I am persuaded you are not a stranger to; and I am afraid that they who can content themselves with aiming at any thing short of this in their profession are too much strangers to themselves, and to the nature of that liberty wherewith Jesus has promised to make his people free. That you may go on from strength to strength, increasing in the light and image of our Lord and Saviour, is the sincere prayer of, &c.

LETTER VII.

ON THE PROPRIETY OF A MINISTERIAL ADDRESS TO THE UNCONVERTED.

SIR,

In a late conversation, you desired my thoughts concerning a scriptural and consistent manner of addressing the consciences of unawakened sinners in the course of your ministry. It is a point on which many eminent ministers have been, and are not a little divided; and it therefore becomes me to propose my sentiments with modesty and caution, so far as I am constrained to differ from any, from whom, in general, I would be glad to learn.

Some think that it is sufficient to preach the great truths of the word of God in their hearing; to set forth the utterly ruined and helpless state of fallen man by nature, and the appointed method of salvation by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and then to leave the application entirely to the agency of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enlighten the dark understandings of sinners, and enable them to receive, in a due manner, the doctrines either of the law or the gospel.

And they apprehend, that all exhortations, arguments, and motives, addressed to those who are supposed to be still under the influence of a carnal mind, are inconsistent with the principles of free grace, and the acknowledged inability of such persons to perform any spiritual acts; and that, therefore, the preachers who, avowing the doctrines of free grace, do, notwithstanding, plead and expostulate with sinners, usually contradict themselves, and retract in their application what they had laboured to establish in the course of their sermons.

There are others, who, though they would be extremely unwilling to derogate from the free grace and sovereign power of God in the great work of conversion, or in the least degree to encourage the mistaken notion which every unconverted person has of his own power; yet think it their duty to deal with sinners as rational and moral agents; and as such, besides declaring the counsel of God in a doctrinal way, to warn them by the terrors of the Lord, and to beseech them, by his tender mercies, that they receive not the grace of God in a preached gospel in vain. Nor can it be denied, but that some of them, when deeply affected with the worth of souls, and the awful importance of eternal things, have sometimes, in the warmth of their hearts, dropped unguarded expressions, and such as have been justly liable to exception.

If we were to decide to which of these different methods of preaching the preference is due, by the discernable effects of each, it will, perhaps, appear in fact, without making any invidious comparisons, that those ministers whom the Lord has honoured with the greatest success in awakening and converting sinners, have generally been led to adopt the more popular way of exhortation or address; while they who have been studiously careful to avoid any direct application to sinners, as unnecessary and improper, if they have not been altogether without seals to their ministry, yet their labours have been more owned in building up those who have already received the knowledge of the truth, than in adding to their number. Now, as "he that winneth souls is wise," and as every faithful labourer has a warm desire of being instrumental in raising the dead in sin to a life of righteousness, this seems at least a presumptive argument in favour of those who, besides stating the doctrines of the gospel, endeavour, by earnest persuasions and expostulations, to impress them upon the hearts of their hearers, and intreat and warn them to consider "how they shall escape, if they neglect so great salvation." For it is not easy to conceive, that the Lord should most signally bear testimony in favour of that mode of preaching which is least consistent with the truth, and with itself.

But not to insist on this, nor to rest the cause on the authority or examples of men, the best of whom are imperfect and fallible, let us consult the scriptures, which, as they furnish us with the whole subject-matter of our ministry, so they afford us perfect precepts and patterns for its due and orderly dispensation. With respect to the subject of our inquiry, the examples of our Lord Christ, and of his authorised ministers, the apostles, are both our rule and our warrant. The Lord Jesus was the great preacher of free grace, "who spake as never man spake;" and his ministry, while it provided relief for the weary and heavy-laden, was eminently designed to stain the pride of all human glory. He knew what was in man, and declared, that none could come unto him, unless drawn and taught of God; John vi. 44—46. And yet he often speaks to sinners in terms, which, if they were not known to be his, might perhaps, be censured as inconsistent and legal; John vi. 27.; Luke xiii. 24—27.; John xii. 35.—It appears, both from the context and the tenor of these passages, that they were immediately spoken not to his disciples, but to the multitude. The apostles copied from their Lord: they taught, that we have no sufficiency of ourselves, even to think a good thought, and that "it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy;" yet they plainly call upon sinners (and that before they had given evident signs that they were pricked to the heart, as Acts iii. 31.) "to repent, and to turn from their vanities to the living God;" Acts iii. 19. and xiv. 15. and xvii. 30.—Peter's advice to Simon Magus is very full and express to this point: For though he perceived him to be "in the very gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," he exhorted him "to repent, and to pray, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven." It may be presumed, that we cannot have stronger evidence, that any of our hearers are in a carnal and unconverted state, than Peter had in the case of Simon Magus; and therefore there seems no sufficient reason why we should hesitate to follow the apostle's example.

You have been told, that repentance and faith are spiritual acts, for the performance of which, a principle of spiritual life is absolutely necessary: and that therefore, to exhort an unregenerate sinner to repent or believe, must be as vain and fruitless as to call a dead person out of his grave. To this it may be answered, that we might cheerfully and confidently undertake even to call the dead out of their graves, if we had the command and promise of God to warrant the attempt; for then we might expect his power would accompany our word. The vision of Ezekiel, chap. xxxvii. may be fitly accommodated to illustrate both the difficulties and the encouragement of a gospel minister. The deplorable state of many of our hearers may

often remind us of the Lord's question to the prophet, "Can these dry bones live?" Our resource, like that of the prophet, is entirely in the sovereignty, grace, and power of the Lord: "O Lord, thou knowest, impossible as it is to us, it is easy for thee to raise them unto life; therefore we renounce our own reasonings; and though we see that they are dead, we call upon them at thy bidding, as if they were alive, and say, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! The means is our part, the work is thine, and to thee be all the praise." The dry bones could not hear the prophet; but while he spoke, the Lord caused breath to enter into them, and they lived, but the word was spoken to them considered as dry and dead.

It is true the Lord can, and I hope he often does make that preaching effectual to the conversion of sinners, wherein little is said expressly to them, only the truths of the gospel are declared in their hearing; but he who knows the frame of the human heart, has provided us with a variety of the topics which have a moral suitableness to engage the faculties, affections, and consciences of sinners, so far at least as to leave themselves condemned if they persist in their sins, and by which he often effects the purposes of his grace; though none of the means of grace by which he ordinarily works, can produce a real change in the heart, unless they are accompanied with the efficacious power of his Spirit. Should we admit, that an unconverted person is not a proper subject of ministerial exhortation, because he has no power in himself to comply, the just consequence of this position would, perhaps, extend too far, even to prove the impropriety of all exhortation universally: For when we invite the weary and heavy-laden to come to Jesus, that they may find rest; when we call upon backsliders to remember from whence they are fallen, "to repent and to do their first works;" yea, when we exhort believers "to walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory;" in each of these cases we press them to acts for which they have no inherent power of their own; and unless the Lord the Spirit is pleased to apply the word to their hearts, we do but speak to the air; and our endeavours can have no more effect in these instances, than if we were to say to a dead body, "Arise, and walk." For an exertion of divine power is no less necessary to the healing of a wounded conscience, than to the breaking of a hard heart; and only he who has begun the good work of grace, is able either to revive or to maintain it.

Though sinners are destitute of spiritual life, they are not therefore mere machines. They have a power to do many things, which they may be called upon to exert. They are able of considering their ways; they know they are mortal; and the bulk of them are persuaded in their consciences, that after death there is an appointed judgment. They are not under an inevitable necessity of living in known and gross sins; that they do so, is not for want of power, but for want of will. The most profane swearer can refrain from his oaths, while in the presence of a person whom he fears, and to whom he knows it would be displeasing. Let a drunkard see poison put into his liquor, and it may stand by him untasted from morning to night. And many would be deterred from sins to which they are greatly addicted, by the presence of a child, though they have no fear of God before their eyes. They have a power likewise of attending upon the means of grace; and though the Lord only can give them true faith and evangelical repentance, there seems no impropriety to invite them, upon the ground of the gospel-promises, to seek to him who is exalted to bestow these blessings, and who is able to do that for them, which they cannot do for themselves, and who has said, "Him, that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Perhaps it will not be easily proved, that intreaties, arguments, warnings, formed upon these general principles, which are in the main agreeable and adequate to the remaining light of natural conscience, are at all inconsistent with those doctrines which ascribe the whole of a sinner's salvation, from first to last, to the free sovereign grace of God.

We should, undoubtedly, endeavour to maintain a consistency in our preaching; but unless we keep the plan and manner of the scripture constantly in view, and attend to every part of it, a design of consistency may fetter our sentiments, and greatly preclude our usefulness. We need not wish to be more consistent than the inspired writers, nor be afraid of speaking, as they have spoken before us. We may easily perplex ourselves, and our hearers, by nice reasonings on the nature of human liberty, and the divine agency on the hearts of men; but such disquisitions are better avoided. We shall, perhaps, never have full satisfaction on these subjects, till we arrive in the world of light. In the mean time, the path of duty, the good old way, lies plain before us. If when you are in the pulpit, the Lord favours you with a lively sense of the greatness of the trust, and the worth of the souls committed to your charge, and fills your heart with his constraining love, many little curious distinctions, which amused you at other times, will be forgotten. Your soul will go forth with your words; and while your bowels yearn over poor sinners, you will not hesitate a moment, whether you ought to warn them of their danger or not. That great champion of free grace, Dr. Owen, has a very solemn address to sinners, the running title to which is, "Exhortations unto believing." It

is in his Exposition of the 130th Psalm, from p. 242, to 247. London edition, 1609, which I recommend to your attentive consideration.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

ON THE INWARD WITNESS TO THE GROUND AND REALITY OF FAITH.

SIR,

I READILY offer you my thoughts on 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself;" though, perhaps, you will think I am writing a sermon rather than a letter. If we believe in the Son of God, whatever trials we may meet with in the present life, our best concerns are safe, and our happiness is sure. If we do not, whatever else we have, or seem to have, we are in a state of condemnation; and living and dying so, must perish. Thousands, it is to be feared, persuade themselves that they are believers, though they cannot stand the test of scripture. And there are many real believers, who, through the prevalence of remaining unbelief and the temptations of Satan, form hard conclusions against themselves though the scripture speaks peace to them. But how does this correspond with the passage before us which asserts universally, "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself?" for can a man have the witness in himself and yet not know it? It may be answered, The evidence, in its own nature, is sufficient and infallible; but we are very apt, when we would form a judgment of ourselves, to superadd rules and marks of trial which are not given us, for that purpose, in the Bible. That the word and Spirit of God do witness for his children, is a point in which many are agreed, who are far from being agreed, as to the nature and manner of that witness. It is, therefore, very desirable rightly to understand the evidence by which we are to judge whether we are believers or not.

The importance and truth of the gospel-salvation is witnessed to in heaven, by "the Father, the Word, and the Spirit." It is witnessed to on earth, by "the Spirit, the water, and the blood," verses 7 and 8. The Spirit, in verse 8, I apprehend, denotes a divine light in the understanding, communicated by the Spirit of God, enabling the soul to perceive and approve the truth. The water seems to intend the powerful influence of this knowledge and light, in the work of sanctification. And the blood, the application of the blood of Jesus to the conscience, relieving it from guilt and fear, and imparting a "peace which passes all understanding." And he that believeth hath this united testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, not by hearsay only, but in himself. According to the measure of his faith (for faith has various degrees) he has a living proof that the witness is true, by the effects wrought in his own heart.

These things, which God has joined together, are too often attempted to be separated. Attempts of this kind have been a principal source and cause of most of the dangerous errors and mistakes which are to be found among professors of religion. Some say much concerning the Spirit, and lay claim to an inward light, whereby they think they know the things of God. Others lay great stress upon the water; maintaining a regular conversation, abstaining from the defilements of the world, and aiming at a mastery over their natural desires and tempers; but neither the one nor the other appear to be duly sensible of the value of the blood of atonement, as the sole ground of their acceptance, and the spring of their life and strength. Others, again, are all for the blood; can speak much of Jesus, and his blood and righteousness; though it does not appear that they are truly spiritually enlightened to perceive the beauty and harmony of gospel-truths, or that they pay a due regard to that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. But Jesus came, not by water only, or by blood only, but by water and blood; and the Spirit bears witness to both, because the Spirit is truth. The water alone affords but a cold starched form of godliness, destitute of that enlivening power which is derived from a knowledge of the preciousness of Jesus, as the Lamb that was slain. And if any talk of the blood without the water, they do but turn the grace of God into licentiousness; so, likewise, to pretend to the Spirit, and at the same time to have low thoughts of Jesus, is a delusion and vanity; for the true Spirit testifies and takes of his glory, and presents it to the soul. But the real believer receives the united testimony, and has the witness in himself that he does so.

To have the witness in ourselves, is to have the truths that are declared in the scripture revealed in our hearts. This brings an experimental conviction, which may be safely depended on, that "we have received the grace of God in truth." A man born blind may believe that the sun is bright upon the testimony of another; but if he should obtain his sight, he would have the witness in himself. Believing springs from a sense and perception of the truths of the gospel; and whoever hath this spiritual perception is a believer. He has the witness in himself. He has received the Spirit; his understanding is enlightened, whereby he sees things to be as they are described, in the word of God, respecting his own state by sin, and the utter

impossibility of his obtaining relief by any other means than those proposed in the gospel. These things are hidden from us by nature. He has likewise received the blood. The knowledge of sin, and its demerits, if alone, would drive us to despair; but by the same light of the Spirit, Jesus is apprehended as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour. All that is declared concerning his person, offices, love, sufferings, and obedience, is understood and approved. Here the wounded and weary soul, finds healing and rest. Then the apostle's language is adopted, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He has likewise received the water, considered as the emblem of sanctification. To a believer, all that the scripture teaches concerning the nature, beauty, and necessity of holiness, as a living principle in the heart, carries conviction and evidence. A deliverance from the power, as well as from the guilt of sin, appears to be an important, and essential part of salvation. He sees his original and his proper happiness, that nothing less than communion with God and conformity to him, is worth his pursuit. And therefore he can say, "My soul thirsteth for thee; I delight in the law of God after the inward man." In a word, his judgment and his choice are formed upon a new spiritual taste, derived from the written word, and correspondent with it, as the musical ear is adapted to relish harmony: so that what God has forbidden, appears hateful; what he has commanded, necessary; what he has promised, desirable; and what he has revealed, glorious. Whoever has these perceptions, has the witness in himself, that he has been taught of God, and believes in his Son.

If you think this explanation is agreeable to the scripture, you will be satisfied that the witness spoken of in this passage, is very different from what some persons understand it to be. It is not an impulse, or strong persuasion impressed upon us in a way of which we can give no account, that "we are the children of God," and that our sins are freely forgiven; nor is the powerful application of a particular text of scripture necessary to produce it; neither is it always connected with a very lively, and sensible comfort. These things, in some persons, and instances, may accompany the witness or testimony we are speaking of, but do not properly belong to it; and they may be, and often have been, counterfeited. But what I have described is inimitable and infallible; it is undubitably, as the magicians confessed of the miracles of Moses, the finger of God, as certainly the effect of his divine power as the creation of the world. It is true, many who have this witness walk in darkness, and are harassed with many doubts and perplexities concerning their state; but this is not because the witness is not sufficient to give them satisfaction, but because they do not account it so; being misled by the influence of self-will and a legal spirit, they overlook this evidence as too simple, and expect something extraordinary; at least, they think they cannot be right, unless they are led in the same way in which the Lord has been pleased to lead others, with whom they may have conversed. But the Lord the Spirit is sovereign and free in his operations; and though he gives to all who are the subjects of his grace, the same views of sin, of themselves, and of the Saviour; yet with respect to the circumstantials of his work, there is, as in the features of our faces, such an amazing variety, that perhaps no two persons can be found whose experiences have been exactly alike: but, as the apostle says, that "he that believeth," that is, whosoever believeth, without exception, "has the witness in himself;" it must, consequently, arise from what is common to them all, and not from what is peculiar to a few.

Before I conclude, I would make two or three observations. In the first place, I think it is plain, that the supposition of a real believer's living in sin, or taking encouragement from the gospel so to do, is destitute of the least foundation in truth, and can only proceed from an ignorance of the subject. Sin is the burden under which he groans; and he would account nothing short of a deliverance from it worthy the name of salvation. A principal part of his evidence, that he is a believer, arises from that abhorrence of sin which he habitually feels. It is true, sin still dwelleth in him; but he loaths and resists it: upon this account he is in a state of continual warfare; if he was not so, he could not have the witness in himself, that he is born of God.

Again, from hence arises a solid evidence, that the scripture is indeed the word of God, because it so exactly describes what is exemplified in the experience of all who are subjects of a work of grace. While we are in a natural state, it is to us as a sealed book; though we can read it, and perhaps assent to the facts, we can no more understand our own concernments in what we read, than if it was written in an unknown tongue. But when the mind is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the scripture addresses us as it were by name, explains every difficulty under which we laboured, and proposes an adequate and effectual remedy for the relief of all our wants and fears.

Lastly, it follows, that the hope of a believer, is built upon a foundation that cannot be shaken, though it may, and will be, assaulted. It does not depend upon occasional and changeable frames, upon any that is precarious and questionable, but upon a correspondence and agreement with the written word. Nor does this agreement depend upon a train

of laboured arguments and deductions, but is self-evident, as light is to the eye, to every person who has a real participation of the grace of God It is equally suited to all capacities; by this the unlearned are enabled to know their election of God, and to "rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory." And the wisest, if destitute of this perception, though they may be masters of all the external evidences of Christianity, and able to combat the cavils of infidels, can see no real beauty in the truths of the gospel, nor derive any solid comfort from them.

I have only sent you a few hasty hints: it would be easy to enlarge; but I sat down, not to write a book, but a letter. May this inward witness preside with power in our hearts, to animate our hopes, and to mortify our corruptions!

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

ON THE DOCTRINES OF ELECTION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter breathes the spirit of a christian, though you say you are not a Calvinist. I should have still confined myself, in my letters, to the great truths in which we are agreed, if you had not invited me to touch upon the points wherein we differ. If you were positive and peremptory in your present sentiments, I should not think it my duty to debate with you; in that case, we might contend as much for victory as for truth. But as you profess yourself an inquirer, and are desirous of forming your judgment agreeable to the word of God, without being influenced by the authority of names and parties, I willingly embrace the occasion you offer me. You say, that though you are not prejudiced against the doctrines of election, and perseverance of the saints, they appear to you attended with such difficulties, that you cannot yet heartily and fully assent to them. May the Lord the Spirit, whose office it is to guide his people into all truth, dictate to my pen, and accompany what I shall write with his blessing.

It is not my intention to prove and illustrate these doctrines at large, or to encounter the various objections that have been raised against them. So much has been done in this way already, that I could only repeat what has been said to greater advantage by others. Nor need I refer you to the books which have been professedly written upon this argument. In a letter to a friend, I shall not aim at the exactness of a disputant, but only offer a few unpremeditated hints, in the same manner as if I had the pleasure of personally conversing with you.

Permit me to remind you, in the first place, of that important aphorism, John iii. 27. (which, by the bye, seems to speak strongly in favour of the doctrines in question): "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." If you should accede to my opinions upon my persuasion only, you would be little benefited by the exchange. The Lord alone can give us the true, vital, comfortable, and useful knowledge of his own truths. We may become wise in notions, and so far masters of a system or scheme of doctrines, as to be able to argue, object, and fight, in favour of our own hypothesis, by dint of application, and natural abilities; but we rightly understand what we say, and whereof we affirm, no farther than we have a spiritual perception of it wrought in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not, therefore, by noisy disputation, but by humble waiting upon God in prayer, and a careful perusal of his holy word, that we are to expect a satisfactory, experimental, and efficacious knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. I am persuaded, that you are seeking in this way; if so, I am confident, you shall not seek in vain. The Lord teaches effectually, though for the most part gradually. The path of the just is compared to the light, which is very faint at the early dawn, but shineth more and more to the perfect day.

If you sincerely seek the Lord's direction by prayer, you will of course make use of his appointed means of information, and search the scriptures. Give me leave to offer you the following advices, while you are reading and comparing spiritual things with spiritual. First, not to lay too great stress upon a few detached texts, but seek for that sense which is most agreeable to the general strain of the scripture. The infallible word of God must doubtless be consistent with itself. If it does not appear so to us, the obscurity and seeming inconsistency must be charged to the remaining darkness and ignorance of our minds. As many locks, whose wards differ, are opened with equal ease by one master-key; so there is a certain comprehensive view of scriptural truth, which opens hard places, solves objections, and happily reconciles, illustrates, and harmonizes many texts, which, to those who have not this master-key, frequently styled the analogy of faith, appear little less than contradictory to each other. When you obtain this key, you will be sure that you have the right sense.

Again, you will do well to consult experience as you go along. For though this is not to be depended upon in the first instance, but must itself be subjected to the rule of the written word, yet it is a good subordinate

help. Consider which sense is most agreeable to what passes within you and around you, and which best answers to the dealings of God with yourself, and to what you can observe of his dealings with others.

Farther, when you are led (as I think you will be, if you are not already) to view the Calvinist doctrines in a favourable light, be not afraid of embracing them, because there may be, perhaps, some objections, which, for want of a full possession of the key I mentioned, you are not able to clear up; but consider if there are not as strong or stronger objections against the other side. We are poor weak creatures: and the clearing up of every difficulty is not what we are immediately called to, but rather to seek that light which may strengthen and feed our souls.

Lastly, compare the tendency of different opinions. This is an excellent rule, if we can fairly apply it. Whatever is from God has a sure tendency to ascribe glory to him, to exclude boasting from the creature, to promote the love and practice of holiness, and increase our dependence upon his grace and faithfulness. The Calvinists have no reason to be afraid of resting the merits of their cause upon this issue; notwithstanding the unjust misrepresentations which have been often made of their principles, and the ungenerous treatment of those who would charge the miscarriages of a few individuals, as the necessary consequence of embracing those principles.

But I must check myself, or I shall finish my letter before I properly begin my subject. You have objections to the doctrine of election. You will, however, agree with me, that the scripture does speak of it, and that in very strong and express terms, particularly St Paul. I have met with some sincere people, as I believe, who have told me that they could not bear to read his 8th chapter to the Romans, but always passed it over; so that their prejudices against election, prejudiced them against a part of the scripture likewise. But why so, unless because the dreaded doctrine is maintained too plainly to be evaded? But you will say, that some writers and preachers attempt to put an easier sense upon the apostle's words. Let us judge then, as I lately proposed, from experience. Admitting, what I am sure you will admit, the total depravity of human nature, how can we account for the conversion of a soul to God, unless we likewise admit an election of grace? The work must begin somewhere. Either the sinner first seeks the Lord, or the Lord first seeks the sinner. The former is impossible, if by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins; if the God of this world has blinded our eyes, and maintains the possession of our hearts; and if our carnal minds, so far from being disposed to seek God, are enmity against him. Let me appeal to yourself. I think you know yourself too well to say, that you either sought or loved the Lord first; perhaps you are conscious, that for a season, and so far as in you lay, you even resisted his call; and must have perished, if he had not made you willing in the day of his power, and saved you in defiance of yourself. In your own case, you acknowledge that he began with you; and it must be the case universally with all that are called, if the whole race of mankind are by nature enemies to God. Then farther, there must be an election, unless *all* are called. But we are assured that the broad road which is thronged with the greatest multitudes, leads to destruction. Were not you and I in this road? Were we better than those who continue in it still? What has made us differ from our former selves? Grace. What has made us differ from those who are now as we once were? Grace. Then this grace, by the very terms, must be differencing, or distinguishing grace; that is, in other words, electing grace. And to suppose, that God should make this election or choice only at the time of our calling, is not only unscriptural, but contrary to the dictates of right reason, and the ideas we have of the divine perfections, particularly those of omniscience and immutability. They who believe there is any power in man by nature, whereby he can turn to God, may contend for a conditional election upon the foresight of faith and obedience; but while others dispute, let you and me admire; for we know that the Lord foresaw us (as we were) in a state utterly incapable either of believing or obeying, unless he was pleased to work in us to will and to do according to his own good pleasure.

As to final perseverance, whatever judgment we form of it in a doctrinal view, unless we ourselves do so persevere, our profession of religion will be utterly vain; for only "they that endure to the end shall be saved." It should seem, that whoever believes this, and is duly apprised of his own weakness, the number and strength of his spiritual enemies, and the difficulties and dangers arising from his situation in this evil world, will at least be desirous to have, if possible, some security, that his labour and expectation shall not be in vain. To be at an uncertainty in a point of so great importance, to have nothing to trust to for our continuance in well-doing, but our own feeble efforts, our partial diligence, and short-sighted care, must surely be distressing, if we rightly consider how unable we are in ourselves to withstand the forces of the devil, the world, and the flesh, which are combined against our peace. In this view I should expect, that the opposers of this doctrine, if thoroughly sensible of their state and situation, upon a supposition that they should be able to prove it unscriptural and false, would weep over their victory, and be sorry

that a sentiment, so apparently suited to encourage and animate our hope, should not be founded in truth. It is not to be wondered at, that this doctrine, which gives to the Lord the glory due to his name, and provides so effectually for the comfort of his people, should be opposed and traduced by men of corrupt hearts. But it may well seem strange, that they who feel their need of it, and cannot be comfortable without it, should be afraid or unwilling to receive it. Yet many a child of light is walking in darkness upon this account. Either they are staggered by the sentiments of those whom they think wiser than themselves, or stumbled by the falls of professors who were once advocates for this doctrine, or perplexed because they cannot rightly understand those passages of scripture which seem to speak a different language. But as light and knowledge increase, these difficulties are lessened. The Lord claims the honour, and he engages for the accomplishment of a complete salvation, that no power shall pluck his people out of his hand, or separate them from his love. Their perseverance in grace, besides being asserted in many express promises, may be proved with the fullest evidence from the unchangeableness of God, the intercession of Christ, the union which subsists between him and his people, and from the principle of spiritual life he has implanted in their hearts, which, in its own nature, is connected with everlasting life; for grace is the seed of glory. I have not room to enlarge on these particulars, but refer you to the following texts, from which various strong and invincible arguments might be drawn for their confirmation; Luke xiv. 28—30, compared with Phil. i. 6.; Heb. vii. 24. with Rom. viii. 34—39.; John xiv. 19. with John xv. 1, 2.; John iv. 14. Upon these grounds, my friend, why may not you, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before you, and committed your soul to Jesus, rejoice in his salvation; and say, "While Christ is the foundation, root, head, and husband of his people, while the word of God is Yea and Amen, while the counsels of God are unchangeable, while we have a Mediator and High Priest before the throne, while the Holy Spirit is willing and able to bear witness to the truths of the gospel, while God is wiser than men, and stronger than Satan, so long the believer in Jesus is and shall be safe. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the promise, the oath, and the blood, on which my soul relies, afford me a security which can never fail."

As the doctrines of election and perseverance are comfortable, so they cut off all pretence of boasting and self-dependence, when they are truly received in the heart, and therefore tend to exalt the Saviour. Of course they stain the pride of all human glory, and leave us nothing to glory in but the Lord. The more we are convinced of our utter depravity and inability from first to last, the more excellent will Jesus appear. The whole may give the physician a good word, but the sick alone know how to prize him. And here I cannot but remark a difference between those who have nothing to trust to but free grace, and those who ascribe a little at least to some good disposition and ability in man. We assent to whatever they enforce from the word of God on the subject of sanctification. We acknowledge its importance, its excellency, its beauty; but we could wish they would join more with us in exalting the Redeemer's name. Their experience seems to lead them to talk of themselves, of the change that is wrought in them, and the much that depends upon their own watchfulness and striving. We likewise would be thankful if we could perceive a change wrought in us by the power of grace. We desire to be found watching likewise. But when our hopes are most alive, it is less from a view of the imperfect beginnings of grace in our hearts, than from an apprehension of him who is our all in all. His person, his love, his sufferings, his intercession, compassion, fulness, and faithfulness,—these are our delightful themes, which leave us little leisure, when in our best frames, to speak of ourselves. How do our hearts soften, and our eyes melt, when we feel some liberty in thinking and speaking of him! For we had no help in time past, nor can have any in time to come, but from him alone. If any persons have contributed a mite to their own salvation, it was more than we could do. If any were obedient and faithful to the first calls and impressions of his Spirit, it was not our case. If any were prepared to receive him before hand, we know that we were in a state of alienation from him. We needed sovereign irresistible grace to save us, or we had been lost for ever. If there are any who have a power of their own, we must confess ourselves poorer than they are. We cannot watch, unless he watches with us; we cannot strive, unless he strives with us; we cannot stand one moment, unless he holds us up; and we believe we must perish after all, unless his faithfulness is engaged to keep us. But this, we trust, he will do, not for our righteousness, but for his own name's sake, and because, having loved us with an everlasting love, he has been pleased, in lovingkindness, to draw us to himself, and to be found of us when we sought him not.

Can you think, dear Sir, that a person who lives under the influence of these sentiments, will desire to continue in sin, because grace abounds? No; you are too candid an observer of men and manners, to believe the calumnies which are propagated against us. It is true, there are too many false and empty professors amongst us; but are there none amongst those who hold the opposite senti-

ments? And I would observe, that the objection drawn from the miscarriages of reputed Calvinists is quite beside the purpose. We maintain, that no doctrines or means can change the heart, or produce a gracious conversation, without the efficacious power of almighty grace; therefore, if it is found to be so in fact, it should not be charged against our doctrine, but rather admitted as a proof and confirmation of it. We confess, that we fall sadly short in every thing, and have reason to be ashamed and amazed that we are so faintly influenced by such animating principles; yet, upon the whole, our consciences bear us witness, and we hope we may declare it both to the church and to the world, without just fear of contradiction, that the doctrines of grace are doctrines according to godliness.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

A; OR, GRACE IN THE BLADE. MARK IV. 28.

DEAR SIR,

ACCORDING to your desire, I sit down to give you my general views of a progressive work of grace, in the several stages of a believer's experience, which I shall mark by the different characters, A, B, C, answerable to the distinctions our Lord teaches us to observe from the growth of the corn, Mark iv. 28. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The Lord leads all his people effectually and savingly to the knowledge of the same essential truths, but in such a variety of methods, that it will be needful, in this disquisition, to set aside, as much as possible, such things as may be only personal and occasional in the experience of each, and to collect those only which, in a greater or less degree, are common to them all. I shall not, therefore, give you a copy of my own experience, or of that of any individual; but shall endeavour, as clearly as I can, to state what the scripture teaches us concerning the nature and essentials of a work of grace, so far as it will bear a general application to all those who are the subjects of gracious operations.

By nature we are all dead in trespasses and sins, not only strangers to God, but in a state of enmity and opposition to his government and grace. In this respect, whatever difference there may be in the characters of men as members of society, they are all, whether wise or ignorant, whether sober or profane, equally incapable of receiving or approving divine truths, 1 Cor. ii. 14. On this ground our Lord declares, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who has sent me draws him." Though the term Father most frequently ex[illegible] degrees of this [illegible]inction in [illegible]ure, and is our Lord so[illegible]ain in or the Divin[illegible]ces from his huma[illegible] this I take to be [illegible] can come unto [illegible] God," and wroug[illegible] The immediate ex[illegible] cording to the econ[illegible] ther ascribed to the [illegible] Father, John xvi. 8[illegible]e power of the God and [illegible] Lord Jesus Christ; and there[illegible]etally attributed to the Father, Son, [illegible] Spirit, John v. 21, and ch. vi. 44, 63; 2 Cor. iii. 18; 2 Thes. iii. 5.

By A, I would understand a person who is under the drawings of God, which will infallibly lead him to the Lord Jesus Christ, for life and salvation. The beginning of this work is instantaneous. It is effected by a certain kind of light communicated to the soul, to which it was before an utter stranger. The eyes of the understanding are opened and enlightened. The light at first afforded is weak and indistinct, like the morning dawn; but when it is once begun, it will certainly increase and spread to the perfect day. We commonly speak as if conviction of sin was the first work of God upon the soul that he is in mercy about to draw unto himself. But I think this is inaccurate. Conviction is only a part, or rather an immediate effect of that first work; and there are many convictions which do not at all spring from it, and therefore are only occasional and temporary, though for a season they may be very sharp, and put a person upon doing many things. In order to a due conviction of sin, we must previously have some adequate conceptions of the God with whom we have to do. Sin may be feared as dangerous without this; but its nature and demerit can only be understood by being contrasted with the holiness, majesty, goodness, and truth, of the God against whom it is committed. No outward means, no mercies, judgments, or ordinances, can communicate such a discovery of God, or produce such a conviction of sin, without the concurrence of this divine light and power to the soul. The natural conscience and passions may indeed be so far wrought upon by outward means, as to stir up some desires and endeavours; but if these are not founded in a spiritual apprehension of the perfections of God, according to the revelation he has made of himself in his word, they will sooner or later come to nothing; and the person affected will either return by degrees to his former ways, 2 Peter ii. 20, or he will sink into a self-righteous form of godliness, destitute of the power, Luke xviii. 11. And therefore, as there are so many things in the dispensation of the gospel suited to work upon

that a sentiments of men, the many woeful courage and and apostacies amongst profes- founded more to be lamented than wondered at. For though the seed may seem to spring up, and look green for a season, if there be not depth for it to take root, it will surely wither away. We may be unable to judge with certainty upon the first appearance of a religious profession, whether the work be thus deep and spiritual, or not; but "the Lord knows them that are his;" and wherever it is real, it is an infallible token of salvation. Now, as God only thus reveals himself by the medium of scripture-truth, the light received this way leads the soul to the scripture from whence it springs, and all the leading truths of the word of God soon begin to be perceived and assented to. The evil of sin is acknowledged, the evil of the heart is felt. There may be for a while some efforts to obtain the favour of God by prayer, repentance, and reformation; but for the most part it is not very long before these things are proved to be vain and ineffectual. The soul, like the woman mentioned Mark v. 26, wearied with vain expedients, finds itself worse and worse, and is gradually brought to see the necessity and sufficiency of the gospel-salvation. A may soon be a believer thus far: That he believes the word of God, sees and feels things to be as they are thus described, hates and avoids sin, because he knows it is displeasing to God, and contrary to his goodness; he receives the record which God has given of his Son; has his heart affected and drawn to Jesus by views of his glory, and of his love to poor sinners; ventures upon his name and promises as his only encouragement to come to a throne of grace; waits diligently in the use of all means appointed for the communion and growth of grace; loves the Lord's people, accounts them the excellent of the earth, and delights in their conversation. He is longing, waiting, and praying for a share in those blessings which he believes they enjoy, and can be satisfied with nothing less. He is convinced of the power of Jesus to save him; but, through remaining ignorance and legality, the remembrance of sin committed, and the sense of present corruption, he often questions his willingness; and, not knowing the abounding of grace, and the security of the promises, he fears lest the compassionate Saviour should spurn him from his feet.

While he is thus young in the knowledge of the gospel, burdened with sin, and, perhaps, beset with Satan's temptations, the Lord, "who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom," is pleased, at times, to favour him with cordials, that he may not be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Perhaps his heart is enlarged in prayer, or under hearing, or some good promise is brought home to his mind, and applied with power and sweetness. He mistakes the nature and design of these comforts, which are not given him to rest in, but to encourage him to press forward. He thinks he is then right, because he has them, and fondly hopes to have them always. Then his mountain stands strong. But ere long he feels a change; his comforts are withdrawn; he finds no heart to pray; no attention in hearing; indwelling sin revives with fresh strength, and, perhaps, Satan returns with redoubled rage. Then he is at his wit's end; thinks his hopes were presumptuous, and his comforts delusions. He wants to feel something that may give him a warrant to trust in the free promises of Christ. His views of the Redeemer's gracefulness are very narrow; he sees not the harmony and glory of the divine attributes in the salvation of a sinner; he sighs for mercy, but fears that justice is against him. However, by these changing dispensations, the Lord is training him up, and bringing him forward. He receives grace from Jesus, whereby he is enabled to fight against sin; his conscience is tender; his troubles are chiefly spiritual troubles; and he thinks, if he could but attain a sure and abiding sense of his acceptance in the Beloved, hardly any outward trial would be capable of giving him much disturbance. Indeed, notwithstanding the weakness of his faith, and the prevalence of a legal spirit, which greatly hurts him, there are some things in his present experience which he may, perhaps, look back upon with regret hereafter, when his hope and knowledge will be more established. Particularly that sensibility and keenness of appetite with which he now attends the ordinances, desiring the sincere milk of the word with earnestness and eagerness as a babe does the breast. He counts the hours from one opportunity to another; and the attention and desire with which he hears may be read in his countenance. His zeal is likewise lively; and may be for want of more experience, too importunate and forward. He has a love for souls, and a concern for the glory of God, which, though it may at some times create him trouble, and at others be mixed with some undue motions of self, yet in its principle is highly desirable and commendable, John xviii. 10.

The grace of God influences both the understanding and the affections. Warm affections, without knowledge can rise no higher than superstition; and that knowledge which does not influence the heart and affections, will only make a hypocrite. The true believer is rewarded in both respects; yet we may observe, that though A is not without knowledge, this state is more usually remarkable for the warmth and liveliness of the affections. On the other hand, as the work advances, though the affections are not left out, yet it seems to be carried on principally in the understanding. The old christian has

more solid, judicious, and connected views of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glories of his person and redeeming love; hence his hope is more established, his dependence more simple, and his peace and strength, *ceteris paribus*, more abiding and uniform, than in the case of a young convert; but the latter has, for the most part, the advantage in point of sensible fervency. A tree is most valuable when laden with ripe fruit; but it has a peculiar beauty when in blossom. It is spring-time with A; he is in bloom, and, by the grace and blessing of the heavenly husbandman, will bear fruit in old age. His faith is weak, but his heart is warm. He will seldom venture to think himself a believer; but he sees and feels, and does those things which no one could, unless the Lord was with him. The very desire and bent of his soul is to God, and to the word of his grace. His knowledge is but small; but it is growing every day. If he is not a father or a young man in grace, he is a dear child. The Lord has visited his heart, delivered him from the love of sin, and fixed his desires supremely upon Jesus Christ. The spirit of bondage is gradually departing from him, and the hour of liberty, which he longs for is approaching, when, by a further discovery of the glorious gospel, it shall be given him to know his acceptance, and to rest upon the Lord's finished salvation. We shall then take notice of him by the name of B in a second letter, if you are not unwilling that I should prosecute the subject.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

B; OR, GRACE IN THE EAR. MARK IV. 28.

DEAR SIR,

THE manner of the Lord's work in the hearts of his people is not easily traced, though the fact is certain, and the evidence demonstrable from scripture. In attempting to explain it, we can only speak in general, and are at a loss to form such a description as shall take in the immense variety of cases which occur in the experience of believers. I have already attempted such a general delineation of a young convert, under the character of A, and am now to speak of him by the name of B.

This state I suppose to commence when the soul, after an interchange of hopes and fears, according to the different frames it passes through, is brought to rest in Jesus, by a spiritual apprehension of his complete suitableness and sufficiency, as the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of all who trust in him, and is enabled, by an appropriating faith, to say, "He is mine, and I am his." There are various degrees of this persuasion; it is of a growing nature, and is capable of increase so long as we remain in this world. I call it assurance, when it arises from a simple view of the grace and glory of the Saviour, independent of our sensible frames and feelings, so as to enable us to answer all objections from unbelief and Satan, with the apostle's words, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. viii. 34. This, in my judgment, does not belong to the essence of faith, so that B should be deemed more truly a believer than A, but to the establishment of faith. And now faith is stronger, it has more to grapple with. I think the characteristic of the state of A is desire, and of B is conflict. Not that B's desires have subsided, or that A was a stranger to conflict; but as there was a sensible eagerness and keenness in A's desires, which, perhaps, is seldom known to be equally strong afterwards; so there are usually trials and exercises in B's experience, something different in their kind, and sharper in their measure, than what A was exposed to, or indeed had strength to endure. A, like Israel, has been delivered from Egypt by great power and a stretched-out arm, has been pursued and terrified by many enemies, has given himself up for lost again and again. He has at last seen his enemies destroyed, and has sung the song of Moses and the Lamb upon the banks of the Red Sea. Then he commences B. Perhaps, like Israel, he thinks his difficulties are at an end, and expects to go on rejoicing till he enters the promised land. But alas! his difficulties are in a manner but beginning; he has a wilderness before him, of which he is not aware. The Lord is now about to suit his dispensations to humble and to prove him, and to shew him what is in his heart, that he may do him good at the latter end, and that all the glory may redound to his own free grace.

Since the Lord hates and abhors sin, and teaches his people, whom he loves, to hate it likewise; it might seem desirable (and all things are equally easy to him), that at the same time they are delivered from the guilt and reigning power of sin, they should likewise be perfectly freed from the defilement of indwelling sin, and be made fully conformable to him at once. His wisdom has, however, appointed otherwise. But from the above premises of his hatred of sin, and his love to his people, I think we may certainly conclude, that he would not suffer sin to remain in them, if he did not purpose to overrule it, for the fuller manifestation of the glory of his grace and wisdom, and for the making his salvation more precious to their souls. It is, however, his command, and therefore their duty; yea, further, from the new

nature he has given them, it is their desire, to watch and strive against sin; and to propose the mortification of the whole body of sin, and the advancement of sanctification in their hearts, as their great and constant aim, to which they are to have an habitual persevering regard. Upon this plan B sets out. The knowledge of our acceptance with God, and of our everlasting security in Christ, has, in itself, the same tendency upon earth as it will have in heaven, and would, in proportion to the degree of evidence and clearness, produce the same effects, of continual love, joy, peace, gratitude, and praise, if there was nothing to counteract it. But B is not all spirit. A depraved nature still cleaves to him, and he has the seeds of every natural corruption yet remaining in his heart. He lives likewise in a world that is full of snares, and occasions, suited to draw forth those corruptions; and he is surrounded by invisible spiritual enemies, the extent of whose power and subtilty he is yet to learn by painful experience. B knows, in general, the nature of his Christian warfare, and sees his right to live upon Jesus for righteousness and strength. He is not unwilling to endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and believes, that though he may be sore thrust at that he may fall, the Lord will be his stay. He knows, that his heart is "deceitful and desperately wicked;" but he does not, he cannot know at first, the full meaning of that expression. Yet it is for the Lord's glory, and will, in the end, make his grace and love still more precious, that B should find new and mortifying proofs of an evil nature as he goes on, such as he could not once have believed, had they been foretold to him, as in the case of Peter, Mark xiv. 29. And in effect, the abominations of the heart do not appear in their full strength and aggravation, but in the case of one, who, like B, has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and rejoiced in his salvation. The exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested, not so much by its breaking through the restraint of threatenings and commands, as by its being capable of acting against light and against love. Thus it was with Hezekiah. He had been a faithful and zealous servant of the Lord for many years; but I suppose he knew more of God, and of himself, in the time of his sickness, than he had ever done before. The Lord, who had signally defended him from Sennacherib, was pleased likewise to raise him from the borders of the grave by a miracle, and prolonged the time of his life in answer to prayer. It is plain from the song which he penned upon his recovery, that he was greatly affected with the mercies he had received; yet still there was something in his heart which he knew not, and which it was for the Lord's glory he should be made sensible of; and therefore he was pleased to leave him to himself. It is the only instance in which he is said to have been left to himself, and the only instance in which his conduct is condemned. I apprehend, that in the state of B, that is, for a season after we have known the Lord, we have usually the most sensible and distressing experience of our evil natures. I do not say, that it is necessary that we should be left to fall into gross outward sin, in order to know what is in our hearts; though I believe many have thus fallen, whose hearts, under a former sense of redeeming love, have been as truly set against sin, as the hearts of others who have been preserved from such outward falls. The Lord makes some of his children examples and warnings to others, as he pleases. They who are spared, and whose worst deviations are only known to the Lord and themselves, have great reason to be thankful. I am sure I have: the merciful Lord has not suffered me to make any considerable blot in my profession during the time I have been numbered amongst his people. But I have nothing to boast of herein. It has not been owing to my wisdom, watchfulness, or spirituality, though in the main he has not suffered me to live in the neglect of his appointed means. But I hope to go softly all my days under the remembrance of many things, for which I have as great cause to be abased before him, as if I had been left to sin grievously in the sight of men. Yet, with respect to my acceptance in the Beloved, I know not if I have had a doubt of a quarter of an hour's continuance for many years past. But, oh! the multiplied instances of stupidity, ingratitude, impatience, and rebellion, to which my conscience has been witness! And as every heart knows its own bitterness, I have generally heard the like complaints from others of the Lord's people with whom I have conversed, even from those who have appeared to be eminently gracious and spiritual. B does not meet with these things perhaps at first, nor every day. The Lord appoints occasions and turns in life, which try our spirits. There are particular seasons, when temptations are suited to our frames, tempers, and situations; and there are times when he is pleased to withdraw, and to permit Satan's approach, that we may feel how vile we are in ourselves. We are prone to spiritual pride, to self-dependence, to vain confidence, to create attachments, and a train of evils. The Lord often discovers to us one single disposition by exposing us to another. He sometimes shows us what he can do for us and in us; and at other times how little we can do, and how unable we are to stand without him. By a variety of these exercises, through the over-ruling and edifying influences of the Holy Spirit, B is trained up in a growing knowledge of himself and of the Lord. He learns to be more distrustful of his own heart, and to suspect a snare in every step he takes. The dark and disconsolate hours which he has brought upon

himself in times past, make him doubly prize the light of God's countenance, and teach him to dread whatever might grieve the Spirit of God, and cause him to withdraw again. The repeated and multiplied pardons which he has received, increase his admiration of, and the sense of his obligations to the rich, sovereign abounding mercy of the covenant. Much has been forgiven him, therefore he loves much, and therefore he knows how to forgive and to pity others. He does not call evil good, or good evil; but his own experiences teach him tenderness and forbearance. He experiences a spirit of meekness towards those who are overtaken in a fault, and his attempts to restore such, are according to the pattern of the Lord's dealings with himself. In a word, B's character, in my judgment, is complete, and he becomes a C when the habitual frame of his heart answers to that passage in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xvi. 63. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more (to boast, complain, or censure), because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

C; OR, GRACE IN THE FULL CORN IN THE EAR. MARK iv. 28.

DEAR SIR,

By way of distinction, I assigned to A the characteristic of desire, to B that of conflict. I can think of no single word more descriptive of the state of C than contemplation. His eminence, in comparison of A, does not consist in the sensible warmth and fervency of his affections: in this respect many of the most exemplary believers have looked back with a kind of regret upon the time of their espousals, when, though their judgments were but imperfectly formed, and their views of gospel-truths were very indistinct, they felt a fervour of spirit, the remembrance of which is both humbling and refreshing; and yet they cannot recall the same sensations. Nor is he properly distinguished from B by a consciousness of his acceptance in the Beloved, and an ability of calling God his father; for this I have supposed B has attained to. Though as there is a growth in every grace, C having had his views of the gospel, and of the Lord's faithfulness and mercy, confirmed by a longer experience, his assurance is of course more stable and more simple, than when he first saw himself safe from all condemnation. Neither is C, properly speaking, any more strength or stock of grace inherent in himself than B, or even than A. He is in the same state of absolute dependence, as incapable of performing spiritual acts, or of resisting temptations, by his own power, as he was at the first day of his setting out. Yet, in a sense, he is much stronger, because he has a more feeling and constant sense of his own weakness. The Lord has been long teaching him this lesson by a train of various dispensations; and through grace he can say, He has not suffered so many things in vain. His heart has deceived him so often, that he is now in a good measure weaned from trusting to it; and therefore he does not meet with so many disappointments. And having found again and again the vanity of all other helps, he is now taught to go to the Lord at once for "grace to help in every time of need." Thus he is strong not in himself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

But C's happiness and superiority to B lies chiefly in this, that by the Lord's blessing on the use of means, such as prayer, reading, and hearing of the word, and by a sanctified improvement of what he has seen of the Lord, and of his own heart, in the course of his experience, he has attained clearer, deeper, and more comprehensive views of the mystery of redeeming love; of the glorious excellency of the Lord Jesus, in his person, offices, grace, and faithfulness; of the harmony and glory of all the divine perfections manifested in and by him to the church; of the stability, beauty, fulness, and certainty of the holy scriptures, and of the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of the love of God in Christ. Thus, though his sensible feelings may not be so warm as when he was in the state of A, his judgment is more solid, his mind more fixed, his thoughts more habitually exercised upon the things within the vail. His great business is to behold the glory of God in Christ; and by beholding, he is changed into the same image, and brings forth, in an eminent and uniform manner, the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. His contemplations are not barren speculations, but have a real influence, and enable him to exemplify the christian character to more advantage, and with more consistence, than can, in the present state of things, be expected either from A or B. The following particulars may illustrate my meaning.

1. Humility. A measure of this grace is to be expected in every true christian; but it can only appear in proportion to the knowledge they have of Christ, and of their own hearts. It is a part of C's daily employment to look back upon the way by which the Lord has led him: and while he reviews the Ebenezers he has set up all along the road, he sees, in almost an equal number, the monuments of his own perverse returns, and how he has, in a thousand instances, rendered to the Lord evil for good. Comparing these things together, he can, without affectation

adopt the apostle's language, and style himself "less than the least of all saints, and of sinners the chief." A and B know that they ought to be humbled; but C is truly so, and feels the force of that text which I mentioned in my last, Ezek. xvi. 63. Again, as he knows most of himself, so he has seen most of the Lord. The apprehension of infinite majesty combined with infinite love, makes him shrink into the dust. From the exercise of this grace he derives two others, which are exceedingly ornamental, and principal branches of the mind which was in Christ.

The one is, submission to the will of God. The views he has of his own vileness, unworthiness, and ignorance, and of the divine sovereignty, wisdom, and love, teach him to be content in every state, and to bear his appointed lot of suffering with resignation, according to the language of David in a time of affliction, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

The other is, tenderness of spirit towards his fellow christians. He cannot but judge of their conduct according to the rule of the word. But his own heart, and the knowledge he has acquired of the snares of the world, and the subtilty of Satan, teach him to make all due allowances, and qualify him for admonishing and restoring, in the spirit of meekness, those who have been overtaken in a fault. Here A is usually blameable; the warmth of his zeal, not being duly corrected by a sense of his own imperfections, betrays him often into a censorious spirit. But C can bear with A likewise, because he hath been so himself, and he will not expect green fruit to be ripe.

2. Spirituality. A spiritual taste, and a disposition to account all things mean and vain, in comparison of the knowledge and love of God in Christ, are essential to a true christian. The world can never be his prevailing choice, 1 John ii. 13. Yet we are renewed but in part, and are prone to an undue attachment to worldly things. Our spirits cleave to the dust, in defiance of the dictates of our better judgments; and I believe the Lord seldom gives his people a considerable victory over this evil principle, until he has let them feel how deeply it is rooted in their hearts. We may often see persons entangled and clogged in this respect, of whose sincerity in the main we cannot justly doubt; especially upon some sudden and unexpected turn in life, which brings them into a situation they have not been accustomed to. A considerable part of our trials are mercifully appointed to wean us from this propensity; and it is gradually weakened by the Lord's shewing us at one time the vanity of the creature, and at another his own excellence and all-sufficiency. Even C is not perfect in this respect; but he is more sensible of the evil of such attachments, more humbled for them more watchful against them, and more delivered from them. He still feels a fetter, but he longs to be free. His allowed desires are brought to a point; and he sees nothing worth a serious thought, but communion with God and progress in holiness. Whatever outward changes C may meet with, he will, in general, be the same man still. He has learned, with the apostle, not only to suffer want, but, which is perhaps the harder lesson, how to abound. A palace would be a prison to him, without the Lord's presence, and with this a prison would be a palace. From hence arises a peaceful reliance upon the Lord: he has nothing which he cannot commit into his hands, which he is not habitually aiming to resign to his disposal. Therefore, he is not afraid of evil tidings; but when the hearts of others shake like the leaves of a tree, he is fixed, trusting in the Lord, who, he believes, can and will make good every loss, sweeten every bitter, and appoint all things to work together for his advantage. He sees that the time is short, lives upon the foretastes of glory, and, therefore, accounts not his life, or any inferior concernment dear, so that he may finish his course with joy.

3. A union of heart to the glory and will of God, is another noble distinction of C's spirit. The glory of God and the good of his people are inseparably connected. But of these great ends, the first is unspeakably the highest and most important, and into which every thing else will be finally resolved. Now, in proportion as we advance nearer to him, our judgment, aim, and end, will be conformable to his, and his glory will have the highest place in our hearts. At first it is not so, or but very imperfectly. Our concern is chiefly about ourselves; nor can it be otherwise. The convinced soul inquires, What shall I do to be saved? The young convert is intent upon sensible comforts; and in the seasons when he sees his interest secure, the prospect of the troubles he may meet with in life makes him often wish for an early dismission, that he may be at rest, and avoid the heat and burden of the day. But C has attained to more enlarged views; he has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which would be importunate, if he considered only himself; but his chief desire is, that God may be glorified in him, whether by his life or by his death. He is not his own; nor does he desire to be his own; but so that the power of Jesus may be manifested in him, he will take pleasure in infirmities, in distresses, in temptations; and though he longs for heaven, would be content to live as long as Methuselah upon earth, if by any thing he could do or suffer, the will and glory of God might be promoted. And though he loves and adores the Lord for what he has done and suffered for him, delivered him from, and appointed him to; yet he loves and adores him likewise,

with a more simple and direct love, in which self is in a manner forgot, from the consideration of his glorious excellence and perfections, as he is in himself. That God in Christ is glorious over all, and blessed for ever, is the very joy of his soul; and his heart can frame no higher wish, than that the sovereign, wise, holy will of God, may be accomplished in him, and all his creatures. Upon this grand principle his prayers, schemes, and actions are formed. Thus C is already made like the angels, and, so far as consistent with the inseparable remnants of a fallen nature, the will of God is regarded by him upon earth, as it is by the inhabitants of heaven.

The power of divine grace in C may be exemplified in a great variety of situations. C may be rich or poor, learned or illiterate, of a lively natural spirit, or of a more slow and phlegmatical constitution. He may have a comparatively smooth, or a remarkably thorny path in life; he may be a minister or a layman: these circumstances will give some tincture and difference in appearance to the work; but the work itself is the same; and we must, as far as possible, drop the consideration of them all, or make proper allowances for each, in order to form a right judgment of the life of faith. The outward expression of grace may be heightened and set off to advantage by many things which are merely natural, such as evenness of temper, good sense, a knowledge of the world, and the like: and it may be darkened by things which are not properly sinful, but unavoidable, such as lowness of spirits, weak abilities, and pressure of temptations, which may have effects that they who have not had experience in the same things, cannot properly account for. A double quantity of real grace, if I may so speak, that has a double quantity of hinderances to conflict with, will not be easily observed, unless these hinderances are likewise known and attended to; and a smaller measure of grace may appear great when its exercise meets with no remarkable obstruction. For these reasons we can never be competent judges of each other, because we cannot be competently acquainted with the whole complex case. But our great and merciful High-priest knows the whole; he considers our frame, "remembers that we are but dust:" makes gracious allowances, pities, bears, accepts, and approves, with unerring judgment. The sun, in his daily course, beholds nothing more excellent and honourable upon earth as C, though perhaps he may be confined to a cottage and is little known or noticed by men. But he is the object and residence of divine love, the charge of angels, and ripening for everlasting glory. Happy C! his toils, sufferings, and exercises will be soon at an end; soon his desires will be accomplished; and he who has loved him, and redeemed him with his own blood, will receive him to himself with a "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

If this representation is agreeable to the scriptures, how greatly are they mistaken, and how much to be pitied, who, while they make profession of the gospel, seem to have no idea of the effects it is designed to produce upon the hearts of believers, but either allow themselves in a worldly spirit and conversation, or indulge their unsanctified tempers, by a fierce contention for names, notions, and parties. May the Lord give to you and to me daily to grow in the experience of that wisdom which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

ON HEARING SERMONS.

DEAR SIR,

I AM glad to find that the Lord has at length been pleased to fix you in a favoured situation, where you have frequent opportunities of hearing the gospel. This is a great privilege; but, like all other outward privileges, it requires grace and wisdom to make a due improvement of it: and the great plenty of ordinances you enjoy, though in itself a blessing, is attended with snares, which, unless they are carefully guarded against, may hinder, rather than promote, your edification. I gladly embrace the occasion you afford me, of offering you my advice upon this subject. A remembrance of the mistakes I have myself formerly committed, and the observations I have made upon the conduct of professors, considered as hearers, will, perhaps, in some measure qualify me for the task you have assigned me.

The faithful ministers of the gospel, are all the servants and ambassadors of Christ; they are called and furnished by his Holy Spirit; they speak in his name; and their success in the discharge of their office, be it more or less, depends entirely upon his blessing: so far they are all upon a par. But in the measure of their ministerial abilities, and in the peculiar turn of their preaching, there is a great variety. There are "diversities of gifts from the same Spirit; and he distributes to every man severally according to his own will." Some are more happy in alarming the careless, others in administering consolation to the wounded conscience. Some are set more especially for the establishment and confirmation of the gospel-doctrines; others are skilful in solving casuistical points; others are more excellent in enforcing practical godliness; and others again, having been led

through depths of temptation and spiritual distress, are best acquainted with the various workings of the heart, and know best how to speak a word in season to weary and exercised souls. Perhaps no true minister of the gospel (for all such are taught of God) is wholly at a loss upon either of these points; but few, if any, are remarkably and equally excellent in managing them all. Again, as to their manner, some are more popular and pathetic, but at the same time more general and diffuse; while the want of that life and earnestness in delivery is compensated in others, by the closeness, accuracy, and depth of their compositions. In this variety of gifts, the Lord has a gracious regard to the different tastes and dispositions, as well as to the wants of his people; and by their combined effects, the complete system of his truth is illustrated, and the good of his church promoted with the highest advantage; while his ministers, like officers assigned to different stations in an army, have not only the good of the whole in view, but each one his particular post to maintain. This would be more evidently the case, if the remaining depravity of our hearts did not afford Satan but too much advantage in his subtile attempts to hurt and ensnare us. But alas! how often has he prevailed to infuse a spirit of envy or dislike in ministers towards each other, to withdraw hearers from their proper concernment, by dividing them into parties and stirring them up to contend for a Paul, an Apollos, or a Cephas, for their own favourites, to the disparagement of others who are equally dear to the Lord, and faithful in his service? You may think my preamble long: but I shall deduce my advices chiefly from it; taking it for granted, that to you I may have no need of proving at large what I have advanced.

As the gifts and talents of ministers are different, I advise you to chuse for your stated pastor and teacher, one whom you find most suitable, upon the whole, to your own taste, and whom you are likely to hear with the most pleasure and advantage. Use some deliberation and much prayer in this matter. Intreat the Lord, who knows better than you do yourself, to guide you where your soul may be best fed; and when your choice is fixed, you will do well to make a point of attending his ministry constantly, I mean, at least the stated times of worship on the Lord's day. I do not say, that no circumstance will justify your going elsewhere at such times occasionally; but I think the seldomer you are absent the better. A stated and regular attendance encourages the minister, affords a good example to the congregation; and a hearer is more likely to meet with what is directly suited to his own case, from a minister who knows him, and expects to see him, than he can be from one who is a stranger. Especially, I would not wish you to be absent for the sake of gratifying your curiosity, to hear some new preacher, who you have, perhaps, been told, is a very extraordinary man. For in your way such occasions might possibly offer almost every week. What I have observed of many, who run about unseasonably after new preachers, has reminded me of Prov. xxvii. 8. "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is the man that wandereth from his place." Such unsettled hearers seldom thrive, they usually grow wise in their own conceits, have their heads filled with notions, acquire a dry, critical, and censorious spirit; and are more intent upon disputing who is the best preacher, than upon obtaining benefit to themselves from what they hear. If you could find a man, indeed, who had a power in himself of dispensing a blessing to your soul, you might follow him from place to place; but as the blessing is in the Lord's hand, you will be more likely to receive it by waiting where his providence has placed you, and where he has met with you before.

But as human nature is prone to extremes, permit me to give you a caution on the other hand. If the minister under whom you statedly attend, is made very acceptable to you, you will be in the less danger of slighting him. But be careful that you do not slight any other minister of Christ. If, therefore, when you come to hear your own preacher, you find another in the pulpit, do not let your looks tell him, that if you had known he had been there you would not have come. I wish indeed you may never think so in your heart; but though we cannot prevent evil thoughts from rising in our minds, we should endeavour to combat and suppress them. Some persons are so curious, or rather so weak, that if their favourite minister is occasionally absent, they hardly think it worth their while to hear another. A judicious and faithful minister, in this case, instead of being delighted with such a mark of peculiar attachment to himself, will be grieved to think that they have profited no more by his labours; for it is his desire to win souls, not to himself, but to Jesus Christ. I hope you, my friend, will always attend the ordinances with a view to the Lord's presence; and when you are in your proper place, consider the preacher (if he preaches the truth) as one providentially and expressly sent by the Lord to you at that time; and that you could not chuse better for yourself, all things considered, than he has chosen for you. Do not limit the Almighty, by confining your expectations to a single instrument. If you do, you will probably procure your own disappointment. If you fix your hopes upon the man, the Lord may with-hold his blessing, and then the best men and the best sermons will prove to you but as clouds without water. But, besides the more stated seasons of worship on the Lord's day, you have many opportunities of hearing sermons occasionally

in the course of the week; and thus you may partake of that variety of gifts which I have already spoken of. This will be either a benefit, or otherwise, according to the use you make of it. I would recommend to you to improve these occasions, but under some restrictions.

In the first place, be cautious that you do not degenerate into the spirit of a mere hearer, so as to place the chief stress of your profession upon running hither and thither after preachers. There are many who are always upon the wing: and, without a due regard to what is incumbent upon them in the shop, in the family, or in the closet, they seem to think they were sent into the world only to hear sermons, and to hear as many in a day as they possibly can. Such persons may be fitly compared to Pharaoh's lean kine; they devour a great deal; but for want of a proper digestion, they do not flourish; their souls are lean; they have little solid comfort; and their profession abounds more in leaves than in fruit. If the twelve apostles were again upon earth, and you could hear them all every week; yet if you were not attentive to the duties of the closet, if you did not allow yourself time for reading, meditation, and prayer; and if you did not likewise conscientiously attend to the concernments of your particular calling, and the discharge of your duties in relative life, I should be more ready to blame your indiscretion, than to admire your zeal. Every thing is beautiful in its season; and if one duty frequently jostle out another, it is a sign either of a weak judgment, or of a wrong turn of mind. No public ordinances can make amends for the neglect of secret prayer; nor will the most diligent attendance upon them justify us in the neglect of those duties, which, by the command and appointment of God, we owe to society.

Again, as it is our trial to live in a day wherein so many contentions and winds of strange doctrines abound, I hope you will watch and pray that you may not have itching ears, inclining you to hearken after novel and singular opinions, and the erroneous sentiments of men of unstable minds, who are not sound in the faith. I have known persons, who, from a blameable curiosity, have gone to hear such, not for the sake of edification, which they could not expect, but to know what they had to say, supposing that they themselves were too well established in the truth to be hurt by them. But the experiment (without a just and lawful call) is presumptuous and dangerous. In this way many have been hurt, yea, many have been overthrown. Error is like poison; the subtilty, quickness, and force of its operation, is often amazing. As we pray not to be led into temptation, we should take care not to run into it wilfully. If the Lord has shewn you what is right, it is not worth your while to know (if you could know it) how many ways there are of being wrong.

Farther, I advise you, when you hear a gospel sermon, and it is not in all respects to your satisfaction, be not too hasty to lay the whole blame upon the preacher. The Lord's ministers have not much to say in their own behalf. They feel (it is to be hoped) their own weakness and defects, and the greatness and difficulty of their work. They are conscious that their warmest endeavours to proclaim the Saviour's glory are too cold; and their most importunate addresses to the consciences of men are too faint; and sometimes they are burdened with such discouragements, that even their enemies would pity them, if they knew their case. Indeed, they have much to be ashamed of; but it will be more useful for you, who are a hearer, to consider whether the fault may not possibly be in yourself. Perhaps you thought too highly of the man, and expected too much from him; or perhaps you thought too meanly of him, and expected too little. In the former case, the Lord justly disappointed you; in the latter, you received according to your faith. Perhaps you neglected to pray for him; and then, though he might be useful to others, it is not at all strange that he was not so to you. Or possibly you have indulged a trifling spirit, and brought a dearth and deadness upon your own soul, for which you had not been duly humbled, and the Lord chose that time to rebuke you.

Lastly, as a hearer, you have a right to try all doctrines by the word of God; and it is your duty so to do. Faithful ministers will remind you of this; they will not wish to hold you in an implicit and blind obedience to what they say upon their own authority, nor desire that you should follow them farther than they have the scriptures for their warrant. They would not be lords over your conscience, but helpers of your joy. Prize this gospel-liberty, which sets you free from the doctrines and commandments of men; but do not abuse it to the purposes of pride and self. There are hearers who make themselves, and not the scripture, the standard of their judgment. They attend not so much to be instructed, as to pass their sentence. To them the pulpit is the bar at which the minister stands to take his trial before them,—a bar at which few escape censure, from judges at once so severe and inconsistent. For as these censors are not all of a mind, and, perhaps, agree in nothing so much as in the opinion they have of their own wisdom, it has often happened, that, in the course of one and the same sermon, the minister has been condemned as a legalist, and an antinomian; as too high in his notions, and too low; as having too little action, and too much. Oh! this is a hateful spirit, that prompts hearers to pronounce *ex cathedrâ*, as if they were infallible, breaks in upon the rights of private judg-

ment, even in matters not essential, and makes a man an offender for a word. This spirit is one frequent unhappy evil, which springs from the corruption of the heart, when the Lord affords the means of grace in great abundance. How highly would some of the Lord's hidden ones, who are destitute of the ordinances, prize the blessing of a preached gospel, with which too many professors seem to be surfeited. I pray God to preserve you from such a spirit (which, I fear, is spreading, and infects us like the pestilence), and to guide you in all things.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

ON TEMPTATION.

DEAR SIR,

WHAT can you expect from me on the subject of temptation, with which you have been so much more conversant than myself? On this point I am more disposed to receive information from you, than to offer my advice. You, by the Lord's appointment, have had much business and exercise on these great waters; whereas the knowledge I have of what passes there, I have gained more from observation than from actual experience. I shall not wonder, if you think I write like a novice; however, your request has the force of a command with me. I shall give you my thoughts, or rather shall take occasion to write, not so much to you as to others, who, though they may be plunged in the depths of temptation, have not yet seen so much of the wisdom and power of God in these dispensations as yourself. I shall first inquire, why the Lord permits some of his people to suffer such violent assaults from the powers of darkness; and then suggest a few advices to tempted souls.

The temptations of Satan (which, though not the most painful, are in reality the most dangerous) do not directly belong to my present design. I mean those by which he is too successful in drawing many professors from the path of duty, in filling them with spiritual pride, or lulling them into carnal security. In these attempts, he is often most powerful and prevalent when he is least perceived. He seldom distresses those whom he can deceive. It is chiefly when these endeavours fail, that he fights against the peace of the soul. He hates the Lord's people, grudges them all their privileges and all their comforts; and will do what he can to disquiet them, because he cannot prevail against them. And though the Lord sets such bounds to his rage as he cannot pass, and limits him both as to manner and time, he is often pleased to suffer him to discover his malice to a considerable degree; not to gratify Satan, but to humble and prove them; to shew them what is in their hearts, to make them truly sensible of their immediate and absolute dependence upon himself, and to quicken them to watchfulness and prayer. Though temptations, in their own nature, are grievous and dreadful, yet, when, by the grace of God, they are productive of these effects, they deserve to be numbered among the "all things," which are appointed to work together for the good of those who love him. The light carriage, vain confidence, and woeful backslidings of many professors, might, perhaps (speaking after the manner of men), have been in some measure prevented, had they been more acquainted with this spiritual warfare, and had they drunk of the cup of temptation, which but few of those who walk humbly and uprightly are exempted from tasting of, though not all in the same degree. One gracious end, therefore, that the Lord has in permitting his people to be tempted, is for the prevention of greater evils, that they may not grow proud or careless, or be ensnared by the corrupt customs of the world. In this view, I doubt not, however burdensome your trials may at some seasons prove, you are enabled, by your composed judgment, to rejoice in them, and be thankful for them. You know what you suffer now; but you know not what might have been the consequence, if you had never smarted by the fiery darts of the wicked one. You might have been taken in a more fatal snare, and been numbered with those who, by their grievous declensions and falls, have caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of.

Another design is, for the manifestation of his power, and wisdom, and grace, in supporting the soul under such pressures as are evidently beyond its own strength to sustain. A bush on fire, and not consumed, engaged the attention of Moses. This emblem is generally applicable to the state of a christian in the present life; but never more so than when he is in the fire of temptation. And though his heaviest sufferings of this kind are usually hidden from the notice of his fellow-creatures, yet there are other eyes always upon him. "We are," says the apostle, "a spectacle to the world;" not only to men, but to angels also. Many things probably pass in the invisible state, in which we have a nearer concernment than we are ordinarily aware of. The beginning of the book of Job throws some light upon this point, and informs us (of which we should have been otherwise totally ignorant) of the true source of his uncommon sufferings. Satan had challenged him, charged him as a hypocrite, and thought he was able to prove him one, if he could have permission to attack him. The Lord, for the vindication of Job's integrity, and for the manifestation of his own faithfulness and power

in favour of his servant, was pleased to give Satan leave to try what he could do. The experiment answered many good purposes; Job was humbled, yet approved; his friends were instructed; Satan was confuted and disappointed; and the wisdom and mercy of the Lord, in his darkest dispensations towards his people, were gloriously illustrated. This contest, and the event, were recorded for the direction and encouragement of his church to the end of time. Satan's malice is not abated; and though he has met with millions of disappointments, he still, like Goliah of old, defies the armies of God's Israel; he challenges the stoutest, and "desires to have them, that he may sift them as wheat." Indeed, he is far an overmatch for them, considered as in themselves; but though they are weak, their Redeemer is mighty, and they are for ever secured by his love and intercession. "The Lord knows them that are his," and no weapon formed against them can prosper. That this may appear with the fullest evidence, Satan is allowed to assault them. We handle vessels of glass or china with caution, and endeavour to preserve them from falls and blows, because we know they are easily broken. But if a man had the art of making glass malleable, and, like iron, capable of bearing the stroke of a hammer without breaking, it is probable, that instead of locking it carefully up, he would rather, for the commendation of his skill, permit many to attempt to break it, when he knew their attempts would be in vain. Believers are compared to earthen vessels, liable in themselves to be destroyed by a small blow; but they are so strengthened and tempered by the power and supply of divine grace, that the fiercest efforts of their fiercest enemies against them may be compared to the dashing of waves against a rock. And that this may be known and noticed, they are exposed to many trials; but the united and repeated assaults of the men of the world, and the powers of darkness, afford but the more incontestible demonstration, that the Lord is with them of a truth, and that his strength is made perfect in their weakness. Surely this thought, my friend, will afford you consolation; and you will be content to suffer, if God may be glorified by you and in you.

Farther, by enduring temptation, you, as a living member of the body of Christ, have the honour of being conformed to your head. e suffered, being tempted; and because he es you, he calls you to a participation of sufferings, and to taste of his cup; not cup of the wrath of God; this he drank e, and he drank it all. But in afflic- he allows his people to have fellow- with him. Thus they fill up the mea- e of his sufferings, and can say, "As he , so are we in the world." Marvel not the world hates you, neither marvel that n rages against you. Should not the disciple be as his Lord? Can the servant expect or desire peace from the avowed enemies of his Master? We are to follow his steps; and can we wish, if it were possible, to walk in a path strewed with flowers, when his was strewed with thorns? Let us be in nothing terrified by the power of our adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation, and that of God. To us it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake. If we would make peace with the world, the world would let us alone; if we would be content to walk in the ways of sin, Satan would give us no disturbance; but because grace has rescued us from his dominion, and the love of Jesus constrains us to live to him alone, therefore the enemy like a lion robbed of his prey, roars against us. He roars, but he cannot devour; he plots and rages, but he cannot prevail; he disquiets, but he cannot destroy. If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him. In due time he will bruise Satan under our feet, make us more than conquerors, and place us where we shall hear the voice of war no more for ever.

Again, as by temptations we are conformed to the life of Christ, so likewise, by the sanctifying power of grace, they are made subservient to advance our conformity to his image; particularly as we thereby acquire a sympathy and fellow-feeling with our suffering brethren. This is eminently a branch of the mind that was in Christ. He knows how to pity and help those who are tempted, because he has been tempted himself. He knows what temptations mean, not only with that knowledge whereby he knows all things, but by experience. He well remembers what he endured in the wilderness and in the garden; and though it is for his glory and our comfort that he suffered temptation without sin, yet, for that very reason, and because he was perfectly holy, the temptations of Satan were unspeakably more bitter to him than they can be to us. The great duty and refuge of the tempted now is, to apply to him, and they have the highest encouragement to do so, in that they are assured he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. And, for the like reason, they find some consolation in applying to those of their brethren who have suffered the same things. None but these can either understand or pity their complaints. If the Lord has any children who are not exercised with spiritual temptations, I am sure they are but poorly qualified to "speak a word in season to them that are weary." In this school you have acquired the tongue of the learned; and let it not seem a small thing to you, if the Lord has given you wisdom and ability to comfort the afflicted ones. If your prayers, your conversation, and the knowledge they have of your trials, afford them some relief in a dark hour, this is an honour and a privi-

ch I am persuaded you will think
e not purchased too dear by all that
e endured.

Once more, temptations, by giving us a painful sensibility of the weakness of our graces, and the strength of our inward corruptions, tend to mortify the evil principles of self-dependence and self-righteousness, which are so deeply rooted in our fallen nature; to make Christ, in all his relations, offices, and characters, more precious to us; and to convince us, that without him we can do nothing. It would be easy to enlarge upon these and other advantages which the Lord enables his people to derive from the things which they suffer; so that they may say, with Samson, "Out of the eater comes forth meat;" and that what their adversary designs for their overthrow, contributes to their establishment. But I have already exceeded my limits. Enough I hope has been said to prove, that he has wise and gracious ends in permitting them, for a season, to be tossed with tempest, and not comforted. Ere long these designs will be more fully unfolded to us; and we shall be satisfied that he has done all things well. In the mean while it is our duty, and will be much for our comfort, to believe it upon the authority of his word.

I should now proceed to offer some advices to those who are tempted; but I am ready to say, To what purpose? When the enemy comes in like a flood; when the very foundations of hope are attacked; when suspicions are raised in the mind, not only concerning an interest in the promises, but concerning the truth of the scripture itself; when a dark cloud blots out, not only the sense, but almost the remembrance of past comforts; when the mind is overwhelmed with torrents of blasphemous, unclean, or monstrous imaginations, things horrible and unutterable; when the fiery darts of Satan have set the corruptions of the heart in a flame; at such a season a person is little disposed or able to listen to advice. I shall, however, mention some things by which ordinarily Satan maintains his advantage against them in these circumstances, that they may be upon their guard as much as possible.

His principal devices are:

1. To hide from them the Lord's designs, in permitting him thus to rage. Some of these I have noticed; and they should endeavour to keep them upon their minds. It is hard for them, during the violence of the storm, to conceive that any good can possibly arise from the experience of so much evil. But when the storm is over, they find that the Lord is still mindful of them. Now, though a young soldier may well be startled at the first onset in the field of battle, it seems possible, that those who have been often engaged, should at length gain confidence from the recollection of the many instances in which they have formerly found, by the event, that the Lord was surely with them in the like difficulties, and that their fears were only groundless and imaginary. When the warfare is hottest, they have still reason to say, "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him."

2. To make them utter impatient speeches, which do but aggravate their distress. It is said of Job, under his first trials, "In all this he sinned not with his lips, nor charged God foolishly." So long Satan was unable to prevail. Afterwards he opened his mouth, as Jeremiah did likewise, and cursed the day of his birth. When he once began to complain, his causes of complaint increased. We cannot prevent dreadful thoughts from arising in our hearts; but we should be cautious of giving them vent, by speaking unadvisedly. This is like letting in wind upon a smothering fire, which will make it burn more fiercely.

3. To persuade them that all they feel and tremble at, arises immediately from their own hearts. Indeed, it is a most awful proof of our depravity, that we feel something within ready to close with the suggestions of the enemy, in defiance of our better judgment and desires. But it is not so in all cases. It is not always easy, nor is it needful, exactly to draw the line between the temptations of Satan and our own corruptions; but sometimes it is not impossible to distinguish them. When a child of God is tempted to blaspheme the name that he adores, or to commit such evils as even unsanctified nature would recoil at; the enemy has done it, and shall be answerable for the whole guilt. The soul, in this case, is passive, and suffers with extreme reluctance, what it more dreads than the greatest evils which can affect the body. Nor do the deepest wounds of this kind leave a scar upon the conscience, when the storm is over; which is a proof that they are not our own act.

4. To drive them from the throne of grace. Prayer, which is at all times necessary, is especially so in a time of temptation. But how hard is it to come boldly, that we may obtain help in this time of need! But, however hard, it must be attempted. By discontinuing prayer, we give the enemy the greatest encouragement possible; for then he sees that his temptations have the effect which he intends by them, to intercept us from our stronghold. When our Lord was in an agony, he prayed the most earnestly; the ardour of his prayer increased with the distress of his soul. It would be happy if we could always imitate him in this; but too often temptations and difficulties, instead of rousing our application, disheartens and enfeebles us; so that our cries are the faintest when we stand most in need of assistance. But, so long as prayer is restrained, our burden is increased, Psalm xxxii. 3, 5. If he cannot make them omit

praying, he will repeatedly endeavour to weary them, by working upon the legality which cleaves so close to the heart. Satan is a hard task-master, when he interferes in the performance of our spiritual duties. This he does, perhaps, more frequently than we think of; for he can, if it serves his purpose, appear as an angel of light. When the soul is in a tempest, and attempts to pray, he will suggest, that prayer on these occasions should be protracted to such a length, and performed with such steadiness, as is found to be at that season quite impracticable. Such constrained efforts are wearisome; and from the manner of the performance, he takes occasion to fix fresh guilt upon the conscience. Short, frequent, and fervent petitions, which will almost necessarily arise from what is felt when temptation is violent, are best suited to the case; and we need not add to the burden, by tasking ourselves beyond our power, as if we expected to be heard for our much speaking. Blessed be God, that we fight with an enemy already vanquished by our Lord, and that we have a sure promise of victory. The Lord is our banner.

I am, &c.

LETTER XV.

A PLAN OF A COMPENDIOUS CHRISTIAN LIBRARY.

DEAR SIR,

An eager desire of reading many books, though it is often supposed to be the effect of a taste for knowledge, is perhaps a principal cause of detaining multitudes in ignorance and perplexity. When an unexperienced person thus ventures into the uncertain tide of opinions, he is liable to be hurried hither and thither with the changing stream; to fall in with every new proposal, and to be continually embarrassed with the difficulty of distinguishing between probability and truth. Or if, at last, he happily finds a clue to lead him through the labyrinth wherein so many have been lost, he will acknowledge, upon a review, that from what he remembers to have read (for, perhaps, the greater part he has wholly forgotten) he has gained little more than a discovery of what mistakes, uncertainty, insignificance, acrimony, and presumption, are ten obtruded on the world under the disguise of a plausible title-page.

It is far from my intention to depreciate the due, or deny the usefulness of books, without exception: a few well chosen treatises, carefully perused, and thoroughly digested, will deserve and reward our pains; but a multiplicity of reading is seldom attended with a good effect. Besides the confusion it often brings upon the judgment and memory, it occasions a vast expense of time, indisposes for close thinking, and keeps us poor, in the midst of seeming plenty, by reducing us to live upon a foreign supply, instead of labouring to improve and increase the stock of our own reflections.

Every branch of knowledge is attended with this inconvenience; but it is in no one more sensibly felt than when the inquiry is directed to the subject of religion. Perhaps no country has abounded so much with religious books as our own; many of them are truly excellent; but a very great number of those which are usually more obvious to be met with, as they stand recommended by great names, and the general taste of the public, are more likely to mislead an inquirer, than to direct him into the paths of true peace and wisdom.

And even in those books which are in the main agreeable to the word of God, there is often so great a mixture of human infirmity, so much of the spirit of controversy and party, such manifest defects in some, and so many unwarrantable additions to the simple truth of the gospel in others, that, unless a person's judgment is already formed, or he has a prudent friend to direct his choice, he will probably be led into error or prejudice before he is aware, by his attachment to a favourite author.

Allowing, therefore, the advantage of a discreet and seasonable use of human writings, I would point out a still more excellent way for the acquisition of true knowledge: a method, which, if wholly neglected, the utmost diligence in the use of every other means will prove ineffectual; but which, if faithfully pursued in an humble dependence upon the divine blessing, will not only of itself lead us by the straightest path to wisdom, but will also give a double efficacy to every subordinate assistance.

If I may be allowed to use the term book in a metaphorical sense, I may say, that the most high God, in condescension to the weakness of our faculties, the brevity of our lives, and our many avocations, has comprised all the knowledge conducive to our real happiness in four comprehensive volumes. The first, which may be considered as the text, is cheap, portable, and compendious, so that hardly any person in our favoured land, who is apprised of its worth, need be without it; and the other three, which are the best and fullest commentaries upon this, are always at hand for our perusal, and pressing upon our attention in every place and circumstance of our lives.

It will be easily apprehended, that, by the first book, or volume, I mean that perfect and infallible system of truth, the Bible. The internal characters of this book, arising from its comprehensiveness, simplicity, majesty, and authority, sufficiently prove to every enlightened mind, that it is given by inspiration of God. They who are competent judges of this

evidence, are no more disturbed by the suggestions of some men reputed wise, that it is of human composition, than if they were told that men had invented the sun, and placed it in the firmament. Its fulness speaks its author. No case has yet occurred, or ever will, for which there is not a sufficient provision made in this invaluable treasury. Here we may seek (and we shall not seek in vain) wherewith to combat and vanquish every error, to illustrate and confirm every spiritual truth. Here are promises suited to every want, directions adapted to every doubt that can possibly arise. Here is milk for babes, meat for strong men, medicines for the wounded, refreshment for the weary. The general history of all nations and ages, and the particular experience of each private believer, from the beginning to the end of time, are wonderfully comprised in this single volume; so that whoever reads and improves it aright, may discover his state, his progress, his temptations, his danger, and his duty, as distinctly and minutely marked out, as if the whole had been written for him alone. In this respect, as well as in many others, great is the mystery of godliness.

The simplicity, as well as the subject-matter of the Bible, evinces its divine original. Though it has depths sufficient to embarrass and confound the proudest efforts of unsanctified reason, it does not, as to its general import, require an elevated genius to understand it, but is equally addressed to the level of every capacity. As its contents are of universal concernment, they are proposed in such a manner as to engage and satisfy the inquiries of all; and the learned, with respect to their own personal interest, have no advantage above the ignorant. That it is in fact read by many who receive no instruction or benefit from it, is wholly owing to their inattention or vanity. This event may rather excite grief than wonder. The Bible teaches us to expect it. It forewarns us that the natural man cannot receive the things of God, can neither understand nor approve them. It points out to us the necessity of a heavenly teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has promised to guide those who seek him by prayer, into all necessary truth. They who implore his assistance, find the seals opened, the vail taken away, and the way of salvation made plain before them.

The language of the Bible is likewise clothed with inimitable majesty and authority. God speaks in it, and reveals the glory of his perfections, his sovereignty, holiness, justice, goodness, and grace, in a manner worthy of himself, though, at the same time, admirably adapted to our weakness. The most laboured efforts of human genius are flat and languid, in comparison of those parts of the Bible which are designed to give us due apprehensions of the God with whom we have to do. Where shall we find such instances of the true sublime, the great, the marvellous, the beautiful, the pathetic, as in the holy scriptures? Again, the effects which it performs, demonstrate it to be the word of God. With a powerful and penetrating energy, it alarms and pierces the conscience, discovers the thoughts and intents of the heart, convinces the most obstinate, and makes the most careless tremble. With equal authority and efficacy, it speaks peace to the troubled mind, heals the wounded spirit, and can impart a joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the midst of the deepest distress. It teaches, persuades, comforts, and reproves with an authority that can neither be disputed nor evaded; and often communicates more light, motives, and influence, by a single sentence, to a plain unlettered believer, than he could derive from all the voluminous commentaries of the learned. In a word, it answers the character the apostle gives of it: "It is able to make us wise unto salvation; it is completely and alone sufficient to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work." The doctrines, histories, prophecies, promises, precepts, exhortations, examples, and warnings, contained in the Bible, form a perfect WHOLE, a complete summary of the will of God concerning us, in which nothing is wanting, nothing is superflous.

The second volume which deserves our study is the book of Creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work;" nor can we cast our eyes any where, without meeting innumerable proofs of his wisdom, power, goodness, and presence. God is revealed in the least, as well as in the greatest of his works. The sun and the glow-worm, the fabric of the universe, and each single blade of grass, are equally the effects of divine power. The lines of this book, though very beautiful and expressive in themselves, are not immediately legible by fallen man. The works of creation may be compared to a fair character in cypher, of which the Bible is the key: and without this key they cannot be understood. This book was always open to the Heathens; but they could not read it, nor discern the proofs of his eternal power and godhead which it affords. "They became vain in their own imaginations, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator." The case is much the same at this day with many reputed wise, whose hearts are not subjected to the authority of the Bible. The study of the works of God, independent of his word, though dignified with the name of philosophy, is no better than an elaborate trifling and waste of time. It is to be feared none are more remote from the true knowledge of God, than many of those who value themselves most upon their supposed knowledge of his creatures. They may speak in general terms of his wisdom; but they live without him in the world; and their philosophy cannot teach them either to love, or serve, to fear.

or trust him. They who know God in his word, may find both pleasure and profit tracing his wisdom in his works, if their inquiries are kept within due bounds, and in a proper subservience to things of greater importance; but they are comparatively few who have leisure, capacity, or opportunity, for these inquiries. But the book of creation is designed for the instruction of all believers. If they are not qualified to be astronomers or anatomists, yet, from a view of the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars, which he hath created, they learn to conceive of his condescension, power, and faithfulness. Though they are unacquainted with the theory of light and colours, they can see in the rainbow a token of God's covenant-love. Perhaps they have no idea of the magnitude or distance of the sun; but it reminds them of Jesus the Sun of righteousness, the source of light and life to their souls. The Lord has established a wonderful analogy between the natural and the spiritual world. This is a secret only known to them that fear him; but they contemplate it with pleasure; and almost every object they see, when they are in a right frame of mind, either leads their thoughts to Jesus, or tends to illustrate some spiritual truth or promise. This is the best method of studying the book of Nature, and for this purpose it is always open and plain to those who love the Bible, so that he who runs may read.

The book of Providence is the third volume, by which those who fear the Lord are instructed. This likewise is inextricable and unintelligible to the wisest of men who are not governed by the word of God. But when the principles of scripture are admitted and understood, they throw a pleasing light upon the study of divine providence, and, at the same time, are confirmed and illustrated by it. What we read in the Bible of the sovereignty, wisdom, power, omniscience, and omnipresence of God, of his over-ruling all events to the accomplishment of his counsels, and the manifestation of his glory, of the care he maintains of his church and people, and of his attention to their prayers, is exemplified by the history of nations and families, and the daily occurrences of private life. The believer receives hourly and indubitable proofs that the Lord reigns; that verily there is a God that judges in the earth. Hence arises a solid confidence: he sees that his concerns are in safe hands; and he needs not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; while others live at an uncertainty, exposed to the impressions of every new appearance; and, like a ship in a storm, without rudder or pilot, abandoned to the power of the winds and waves. In the history of Joseph, and in the book of Esther, and indeed throughout the Bible, we have specimens of the wise unerring providence of God; what important consequences depend, under his management, upon the smallest events; and with what certainty seeming contingencies are directed to the issue which he has appointed. By these authentic specimens we learn to judge of the whole; and with still greater advantage by the light of the New Testament, which shews us, that the administration of all power in heaven and earth is in the hands of Jesus. The government is upon his shoulders: The King of saints is King of nations, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor a hair from our heads, without his cognizance. And though his ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts; though his agency is vailed from the eye of sense by the intervention of second causes; yet faith perceives, acknowledges, admires, and trusts his management. This study, like the former, does not require superior natural abilities, but is obvious to the weakest and meanest of his people, so far as their own duty and peace are concerned.

The fourth volume is the book of the Heart, or of Human Nature, comprehending the experience of what passes within our own breasts, and the observations we make upon the principles and conduct of others, compared with what we read in the word of God. The heart of man is deep; but all its principles and workings in every possible situation, and the various manners in which it is affected by sin, by Satan, by worldly objects, and by grace, in solitude and in company, in prosperity and in affliction, are disclosed and unfolded in the scriptures. Many who are proud of their knowledge of what they may be safely ignorant of, are utter strangers to themselves. Having no acquaintance with the scriptures, they have neither skill nor inclination to look into their own hearts, nor any certain criterion whereby to judge of the conduct of human life. But the Bible teaches us to read this mysterious book also; shews us the source, nature, and tendency of our hopes, fears, desires, pursuits, and perplexities; the reasons why we cannot be happy in ourselves, and the vanity and insufficiency of every thing around us to help us. The rest and happiness proposed in the gospel, is likewise found to be exactly suitable to the desires and necessities of the awakened heart; and the conduct of those who reject this salvation, as well as the gracious effects produced in those who receive it, prove to a demonstration, that the word of God is indeed a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

My limits will admit but of a few hints upon these extensive subjects. I shall only observe that whoever is well read in these four books, is a wise person, how little soever he may know of what the men of the world call science. On the other hand, though a man should be master of the whole circle of classical, polite, and philosophical knowledge, if he has no taste for the Bible, and has no ability to

apply it to the works of creation and providence, and his own experience, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. I have pointed out a treasure of more worth than all the volumes in the Vatican.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVI.

ON THE INEFFICACY OF OUR KNOWLEDGE.

DEAR SIR,

TO be enabled to form a clear, consistent, and comprehensive judgment of the truths revealed in the scriptures, is a great privilege: but they who possess it are exposed to the temptation of thinking too highly of themselves, and too meanly of others, especially of those, who not only refuse to adopt their sentiments, but venture to oppose them. We see few controversial writings, however excellent in other respects, but are tinctured with this spirit of self-superiority; and they who are not called to this service, if they are attentive to what passes in their hearts, may feel it working within them, upon a thousand occasions; though, so far as it prevails, it brings forcibly home to ourselves the charge of ignorance and inconsistence, which we are so ready to fix upon our opponents. I know nothing as a means more likely to correct this evil, than a serious consideration of the amazing difference between our acquired judgment, and our actual experience; or, in other words, how little influence our knowledge and judgment have upon our own conduct. This may confirm to us the truth and propriety of the apostle's observation, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Not that we are bound to be insensible that the Lord has taught us what we were once ignorant of; nor is it possible that we should be so, but, because, if we estimate our knowledge by its effects, and value it no farther than it is experimental and operative (which is the proper standard whereby to try it), we shall find it so faint and feeble as hardly to deserve the name.

How firmly, for instance, are we persuaded, in our judgments, that God is omnipresent. Great as the difficulties may be which attend our conceptions of this point, the truth itself is controverted by few. It is generally acknowledged by unawakened persons; and, I may add, too frequently known even by believers, as if they knew it not. If the eyes of the Lord are in every place, how strong a guard should this thought be upon the conduct of those who profess to fear him! We know how we are often affected when in the presence of a fellow-worm; if he is one on whom we depend, or who is considerably our superior in life, how careful are we to compose our behaviour, and to avoid whatever might be deemed improper or offensive! Is it not strange, that those who have taken their ideas of the divine majesty, holiness, and purity from the scriptures, and are not wholly insensible of their inexpressible obligations to regulate all they say or do by his precepts, should, upon many occasions, be betrayed into improprieties of behaviour, from which the presence of a nobleman, or a prince, would have effectually restrained them, yea, sometimes, perhaps, even the presence of a child? Even in the exercise of prayer, by which we profess to draw near the Lord, the consideration that his eye is upon us, has little power to engage our attention, or prevent our thoughts from wandering, like the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth. What should we think of a person, who, being admitted into the king's presence upon business of the greatest importance, should break off in the midst of his address, to pursue a butterfly? Could such an instance of weakness be met with, it would be but a faint emblem of the inconsistencies which they who are acquainted with their own hearts, can often charge themselves with in prayer. They are not wholly ignorant in what a frame of spirit it becomes a needy, dependent sinner to approach that God, before whom the angels are represented as vailing their faces; yet, in defiance of their better judgment, their attention is diverted from him with whom they have to do, to the merest trifles; they are not able to realize that presence with which they believe themselves to be surrounded, but speak as if they were speaking to the air. Further, if our sense that God is always present, was in any good measure answerable to the conviction of our judgment, would it not be an effectual preservative from the many importunate, though groundless fears, with which we are harassed! He says, "Fear not, I am with thee:" he promises to be a shield and a guard to those who put their trust in him; yet though we profess to believe his word, and to hope that he is our protector, we seldom think ourselves safe, even in the path of duty, a moment longer than danger is kept out of our view. Little reason have we to value ourselves upon our knowledge of this indisputable truth, when it has no more effective and habitual influence upon our conduct.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty likewise though not so generally owned as the former, is no less fully assented to by those who are called Calvinists. We zealously contend for this point in our debates with the Arminians, and are ready to wonder that any should be hardy enough to dispute the Creator's right to do what he will with his own. While we are only engaged in defence of the election of grace, and have a comfortable hope that we are ourselves of that number, we seem so con-

vinced, by the arguments scripture affords us in support of this truth, that we can hardly forbear charging our adversaries with perverse obstinacy and pride for opposing it. Undoubtedly the ground of this opposition lies in the pride of the human heart; but this evil principle is not confined to any party; and occasions frequently arise, when they who contend for the divine sovereignty are little more practically influenced by it than their opponents. This humiliating doctrine concludes as strongly for submission to the will of God, under every circumstance of life, as it does for our acquiescing in his purpose to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy. But alas! how often do we find ourselves utterly unable to apply it, so as to reconcile our spirits to those afflictions which he is pleased to allot us So far as we are enabled to say, when we are exercised with poverty, or heavy losses or crosses, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," so far, and no farther, are we truly convinced that God has a sovereign right to dispose of us, and all our concernments, as he pleases. How often, and how justly, at such seasons, might the argument we offer to others, as sufficient to silence all their objections, be retorted upon ourselves: "Nay, but who art thou, O man, who repliest against God! Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"—a plain proof that our knowledge is more notional than experimental. What an inconsistence, that while we think God is just and righteous in withholding from others the things which pertain to their everlasting peace, we should find it so hard to submit to his dispensations to ourselves in matters of unspeakably less importance!

But the Lord's appointments, to those who fear him, are not only sovereign, but wise and gracious. He has connected their good with his own glory, and is engaged, by promise, to make all things work together for their advantage. He chooses for his people better than they could choose for themselves. If they are in heaviness, there is a need-be for it, and he withholds nothing from them but what, upon the whole, it is better they should be without. Thus the scriptures teach, and thus we profess to believe. Furnished with these principles, we are at no loss to suggest motives of patience and consolation to our brethren that are afflicted. We can assure them, without hesitation, that if they are interested in the promises, their concerns are in safe hands; that the things which at present are not joyous, but grievous, shall in due season yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness, and that their trials are as certainly mercies as their comforts. We can prove to them, from the history of Joseph, David, Job, and other instances recorded in scripture, that, notwithstanding any present dark appearances, it shall certainly be well with the righteous; that God can and will make crooked things straight; and that he often produces the greatest good from those events which we are apt to look upon as evil. From hence we can infer, not only the sinfulness, but the folly of finding fault with any of his dispensations. We can tell them, that at the worst, the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; and that, therefore, under the greatest pressures, they should so weep as those who expect, in a little time, to have all their tears wiped away. But when the case is our own, when we are troubled on every side, or touched in the tenderest part, how difficult is it to feel the force of these reasonings, though we know they are true to a demonstration? Then, unless we are endued with fresh strength from on high, we are as liable to complain and despond, as if we thought our afflictions sprung out of the ground, and that the Lord had forgotten to be gracious.

I might proceed to shew the difference between our judgment, when most enlightened, and our actual experience with respect to every spiritual truth. We know there is no proportion between time and eternity, between God and the creature, the favour of the Lord and the favour or the frowns of men; and yet often, when these things are brought into close competition, we are sorely put to it to keep stedfast in the path of duty; nay, without new supplies of grace, we should certainly fail in the time of trial, and our knowledge would have no other effect than to render our guilt more inexcusable. We seem to be as sure that we are weak, sinful, fallible creatures, as we are that we exist; and yet we are prone to act as if we were wise and good. In a word, we cannot deny that a great part of our knowledge is, as I have described it, like the light of the moon, destitute of heat and influence; and yet we can hardly help thinking of ourselves too highly upon the account of it.

May we not say with the psalmist, "Lord, what is man!" yea, what an enigma, what a poor inconsistent creature, is a believer? In one view, how great are his character and privileges! He knows the Lord; he knows himself. His understanding is enlightened to apprehend and contemplate the great mysteries of the gospel. He has just ideas of the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the beauties of holiness, and the nature of true happiness. He was once darkness, but now he is light in the Lord. He has access to God by Jesus Christ, to whom he is united, and in whom he lives by faith. While the principles he has received are enlivened by the agency of the Holy Spirit, he can do all things. He is humble, gentle, patient, watchful, faithful. He rejoices in afflictions, triumphs over temptation, lives upon the fore

tastes of eternal glory, and counts not his life dear, so he may glorify God his Saviour, and finish his course with joy. But his strength is not his own; he is absolutely dependent, and is still encompassed with infirmities, and burdened with a depraved nature. If the Lord withdraws his power, he becomes weak as another man, and drops, as a stone sinks to the earth by its own weight. His inherent knowledge may be compared to the windows of a house, which can transmit the light, but cannot retain it. Without renewed and continual communications from the Spirit of grace, he is unable to withstand the smallest temptation, to endure the slightest trial, to perform the least service in a due manner, or even to think a good thought. He knows this, and yet he too often forgets it. But the Lord reminds him of it frequently, by suspending that assistance, without which he can do nothing. Then he feels what he is, and is easily prevailed upon to act in contradiction to his better judgment. Thus repeated experience of his own weakness teaches him, by degrees, where his strength lies: that it is not in any thing that he has already attained, or can call his own, but in the grace, power, and faithfulness of his Saviour. He learns to cease from his own understanding, to be ashamed of his best endeavours, to abhor himself in dust and ashes, and to glory only in the Lord.

From hence we may observe, that believers who have most knowledge, are not, therefore, necessarily the most spiritual. Some may, and do walk more honourably and more comfortably with two talents, than others with five. He who experimentally knows his own weakness, and depends simply upon the Lord, will surely thrive, though his acquired attainments and abilities may be but small; and he who has the greatest gifts, the clearest judgment, and the most extensive knowledge, if he indulges high thoughts of his advantages, is in imminent danger of mistaking and falling at every step; for the Lord will suffer none whom he loves to boast in themselves. He will guide the meek with his eye, and fill the hungry with good things; but the rich he sendeth empty away. It is an invariable maxim in his kingdom, that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVII.

ON A BELIEVER'S FRAMES.

DEAR SIR,

YOU ask me, in your letter, What one should do when he finds himself always still, quiet, and stupid, except in the pulpit; when he is made useful there, but cannot get either comfort or sorrow out of it, or but very rarely? You describe a case which my own experience has made very familiar to me: I shall therefore take the occasion to offer you a few miscellaneous thoughts upon the subject of a believer's frames; and I send them to you, not by post, but from the press; because I apprehend the exercise you speak of is not peculiar to you or to me, but is, in a greater or less degree, the burden of all who are spiritually minded, and duly attentive to what passes in their own hearts, whether they are in the ministry or not.

As you intimate that you are, in the main, favoured with liberty and usefulness in the pulpit, give me leave to ask you, What you would do, if you did not find yourself occasionally poor, insufficient, and, as you express it, stupid, at other times? Are you aware of what might be the possible, the probable, the almost certain consequences, if you always found your spirit enlarged, and your frames lively and comfortable? Would you not be in great danger of being puffed up with spiritual pride? Would you not be less sensible of your absolute dependence upon the power of Christ, and of your continual need of his blood, pardon, and intercession? Would you not be quite at a loss to speak suitably and feelingly to the case of many gracious souls, who are groaning under those effects of a depraved nature, from which, upon that supposition, you would be exempted? How could you speak properly upon the deceitfulness of the heart, if you did not feel the deceitfulness of your own, or adapt yourself to the changing experiences through which your hearers pass, if you yourself were always alike or nearly so? Or how could you speak pertinently of the inward warfare, the contrary principles of flesh and spirit fighting one against another, if your own spiritual desires were always vigorous and successful, and met with little opposition or controul?

The apostle Paul, though favoured with a singular eminency in grace, felt at times that he had no sufficiency in himself, even so much as to think a good thought; and he saw there was a danger of his being exalted above measure, if the Lord had not wisely and graciously tempered his dispensations to prevent it. By "being exalted above measure," perhaps, there may be a reference, not only to his spirit, lest he should think more highly of himself than he ought, but likewise to his preaching, lest, not having the same causes of complaint and humiliation in common with others, he should shoot over the heads of his hearers, confine himself chiefly to speak of such comforts and privileges as he himself enjoyed, and have little to say for the refreshment of those who were discouraged and cast down by continual conflict with indwelling sin. The angel who appeared to Cornelius, did not

preach the gospel to him, but directed him to send for Peter; for, though the glory and grace of the Saviour seems a fitter subject for an angel's powers, than for the poor, stammering tongues of sinful men, yet, an angel could not preach experimentally, nor describe the warfare between grace and sin from his own feelings. And if we could suppose a minister as full of comforts, and as free from failings as an angel, though he would be a good and happy man, I cannot conceive that he would be a good or useful preacher; for he would not know how to sympathize with the weak and afflicted of the flock, or to comfort them under their difficulties with the consolations wherewith he himself, in similar circumstances, had been comforted of God. It belongs to your calling of God as a minister, that you should have a taste of the various spiritual trials which are incident to the Lord's people, that thereby you may possess the tongue of the learned, and know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary; and it is likewise needful to keep you perpetually attentive to that important admonition, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Thus much, considering you as a minister. But we may extend the subject so as to make it applicable to believers in general. I would observe, therefore, that it is a sign of a sad declension, if one, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, should be capable of being fully satisfied with any thing short of the light of his countenance, which is better than life. A resting in notions of gospel-truth, or in the recollection of past comforts, without a continual thirst for fresh communications from the fountain of life, is, I am afraid, the canker which eats away the beauty and fruitfulness of many professors in the present day; and, which, if it does not prove them to be absolutely dead, is, at least, a sufficient evidence that they are lamentably sick. But, if we are conscious of the desire, if we seek it carefully in the use of all appointed means, if we willingly allow ourselves in nothing which has a known tendency to grieve the Spirit of God, and to damp our sense of divine things; then, if the Lord is pleased to keep us short of those comforts which he has taught us to prize, and, instead of lively sensations of joy and praise, we feel a languor and deadness of spirit, provided we do indeed feel it, and are humbled for it, we have no need to give way to despondency or excessive sorrow; still the foundation of our hope, and the ground of our abiding joys, is the same; and the heart may be as really alive to God, and grace as truly in exercise, when we walk in comparative darkness and see little light, as when the frame of our spirits is more comfortable. Neither the reality nor the measure of grace can be properly estimated by the degree of our sensible comforts. The great question is, How are we practically influenced by the word of God as the ground of our hope, and as the governing rule of our tempers and conversation? The apostle exhorts believers to rejoice in the Lord always. He well knew that they were exposed to trials and temptations, and to much trouble, from an evil heart of unbelief; and he prevents the objections we might be ready to make, by adding, "And again, I say, Rejoice!" As if he had said, I speak upon mature consideration; I call upon you to rejoice, not at some times only, but at all times; not only when upon the mount, but when in the valley; not only when you conquer, but while you are fighting; not only when the Lord shines upon you, but when he seems to hide his face. When he enables you to do all things, you are no better in yourselves than you were before; and when you feel you can do nothing, you are no worse. Your experiences will vary; but his love and promises are always unchangeable. Though our desires of comfort, and what we call lively frames, cannot be too importunate, while they are regulated by a due submission to his will, yet they may be inordinate for want of such submission. Sinful principles may, and too often do, mix with and defile our best desires. I have often detected the two vile abominations self-will and self-righteousness, insinuating themselves into this concern; like Satan, who works by them, they can occasionally assume the appearance of an angel of light. I have felt an impatience in my spirit, utterly unsuitable to my state as a sinner and a beggar, and to my profession of yielding myself and all my concerns to the Lord's disposal. He has mercifully convinced me that I labour under a complication of disorders, summed up in the word sin; he has graciously revealed himself to me as the infallible Physician, and has enabled me to commit myself to him, as such, and to expect my cure from his hand alone. Yet how often, instead of thankfully accepting his prescriptions, have I foolishly and presumptuously ventured to prescribe to him, and to point out how I would have him deal with me? How often have I thought something was necessary, which he saw best to deny, and that I could have done better without those dispensations which his wisdom appointed to work for my good? He is God, and not man, or else he would have been weary of me, and left me to my own management long ago. How inconsistent! to acknowledge that I am blind, to intreat him to lead me, and yet to want to chuse my own way, in the same breath. I have limited the Holy One of Israel, and not considered, that he magnifies his wisdom and grace in working by contraries, and bringing good out of seeming evil. It has cost me something to bring myself to confess that he is wiser than I; but I trust, through his blessing, I have not suffered wholly in vain. My sensible com-

forts have not been great; the proofs I have had of the evils of my sinful nature, my incapacity and aversion to good, have neither been few nor small; but by these unpromising means, I hope, he has made his grace and salvation precious to my soul, and in some measure, weaned me from leaning to my own understanding.

Again, self-righteousness has had a considerable hand in dictating many of my desires for an increase of comfort and spiritual strength. I have wanted some stock of my own. I have been wearied of being so perpetually beholden to him, and necessitated to come to him always in the same strain, as a poor, miserable sinner. I could have liked to have done something for myself in common, and to have depended upon him chiefly upon extraordinary occasions. I have found, indeed, that I could do nothing without his assistance, nor any thing, even with it, but what I have reason to be ashamed of. If this had only humbled me, and led me to rejoice in his all-sufficiency, it would have been well. But it has often had a different effect, to make me sullen, angry, and discontented; as if it was not best and most desirable, that he should have all the glory of his own work, and I should have nothing to boast of, but that in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. I am now learning to glory only in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; to be content to be nothing, that he may be all in all. But I find this a hard lesson; and when I seem to have made some proficiency, a slight turn in my spirit throws me back, and I have to begin all again.

This is an inseparable connection between causes and effects. There can be no effect without a cause, no active cause without a proportionable effect. Now indwelling sin is an active cause; and, therefore, while it remains in our nature, it will produce effects according to its strength. Why then should I be surprised, that if the Lord suspends his influence for a moment, in that moment sin will discover itself? Why should I wonder that I can feel no lively exercise of grace, no power to raise my heart to God any farther than he is pleased to work in me mightily,—any more than wonder that I do not find fire in the bottom of a well, or that it should not be day when the sun is withdrawn from the earth? Humbled I ought to be, to find I am so totally depraved; but not discouraged, since Jesus is appointed to me of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and since I find that, in the midst of all this darkness and deadness, he keeps alive the principle of grace which he has implanted in my heart.

As to Mr. Rutherford's expression which you mention, that "there is no temptation like being without temptation;" I allow it in a qualified sense, that is, it is the better of the two, to suffer from Satan's fiery darts, than to be lulled asleep, and drawn into a careless security, by his more subtle, though less perceptible devices; so as to grow indifferent to the means of grace, and sink into a worldly spirit, or, like the church of Laodicea, to imagine ourselves rich, and increased in goods, and that we have need of nothing. But I am persuaded this is not your case; the deadness you complain of, and which is a burden you groan under, is a very different thing. And I advise you to be cautious how you indulge a desire to be exercised with Satan's temptations, as supposing they would be conducive to make you more spiritual, or would, of course, open you a way to greater consolations. If you have such a desire, I may say to you, in our Lord's words, "You know not what you ask." He who knows our weakness, and the power of our adversary, has graciously directed us to pray, that we enter not into temptation. Have you considered what the enemy can do, if he is permitted to come in like a flood? In one hour he could raise such a storm, as would put you to your wit's end. He could bring such a dark cloud over your mind, as would blot out all remembrance of your past comforts, or at least prevent you from deriving the least support from them. He could not only fight against your peace, but shake the very foundations of your hope, and bring you to question, not only your interest in the promises, but even to doubt of the most important and fundamental truths upon which your hopes have been built. Be thankful, therefore, if the Lord restrains his malice. A young sailor is often impatient of a short calm; but the experienced mariner, who has been often tossed with tempests, and upon the point of perishing, will seldom wish for a storm. In a word, let us patiently wait upon the Lord, and be content to follow as he leads, and he will surely do us good.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

THOUGHTS ON THE EXERCISE OF SOCIAL PRAYER

SIR,

I ACCOUNT it a great mercy, that, at this time, when iniquity so generally abounds, there is a number, I hope a growing number, whose eyes affect their hearts, and who are stirred up to unite in prayer for the spreading of gospel-knowledge, and a blessing upon our sinful land. Meetings for social prayer are frequent in different parts of the kingdom, and amongst various denominations of Christians. As the Lord has promised, that when he prepares the heart to pray, he will graciously in-

cline his ear to hear, who can tell but he may yet be intreated for us, and avert the heavy and justly-deserved judgments which seem to hang over us?

It is much to be desired, that our hearts might be so affected with a sense of divine things, and so closely engaged when we are worshipping God, that it might not be in the power of little circumstances to interrupt and perplex us, and to make us think the service wearisome, and the time which we employ in it tedious. But as your infirmities are many and great, and the enemy of our souls is watchful to discompose us, if care is not taken by those who lead in social prayer, the exercise which is approved by the judgment, may become a burden, and an occasion of sin. Complaints of this kind are frequent, and might perhaps be easily rectified, if the persons chiefly concerned were spoken to in love. But as they are usually the last who hear of it, it may perhaps be of service to communicate a few remarks on a subject of such general concern.

The chief fault of some good prayers is, that they are too long; not that I think we should pray by the clock, and limit ourselves precisely to a certain number of minutes; but it is the better of the two, that the hearers should wish the prayer had been longer, than spend half or a considerable part of the time in wishing it was over. This is frequently owing to an unnecessary enlargement upon every circumstance that offers, as well as to the repetition of the same things. If we have been copious in pleading for spiritual blessings, it may be best to be brief and summary in the article of intercession for others; or if the frame of our spirits, or the circumstances of affairs, lead us to be more large and particular in laying the cases of others before the Lord, respect should be had to this intention in the former part of the prayer. There are, doubtless, seasons when the Lord is pleased to favour those who pray with a peculiar liberty; they speak because they feel; they have a wrestling spirit, and hardly know how to leave off. When this is the case, they who join with them are seldom wearied, though the prayer should be protracted something beyond the usual limits. But I believe it sometimes happens, both in praying, and in preaching, that we are apt to spin out our time to the greatest length, when we have, in reality, the least to say. Long prayers should in general be avoided, especially where several persons are to pray successively; or else even spiritual hearers will be unable to keep up their attention. And here I would just notice an impropriety we sometimes meet with, that when a person gives expectation that he is just going to conclude his prayer, something not thought of in its proper place occurring that instant to his mind, leads him as it were to begin again. But unless it is a matter of singular importance, it would be better omitted for that time.

The prayers of some good men are more like preaching than praying. They rather express the Lord's mind to the people, than the desires of the people to the Lord. Indeed this can hardly be called prayer. It might, in another place, stand for a part of a good sermon; but will afford little help to those who desire to pray with their hearts. Prayer should be sententious, and made up of breathings to the Lord, either of confession, petition, or praise. It should be, not only scriptural and evangelical, but experimental, a simple and unstudied expression of the wants and feelings of the soul. It will be so if the heart is lively and affected in the duty; it must be so if the edification of others is the point in view.

Several books have been written to assist in the gift and exercise of prayer, as by Dr Watts, and others; and many useful hints may be borrowed from them; but a too close attention to the method and transitions therein recommended, gives an air of study and formality, and offends against that simplicity which is so essentially necessary to a good prayer, that no degree of acquired abilities can compensate for the want of it. It is possible to learn to pray mechanically, and by rule; but it is hardly possible to do so with acceptance, and benefit to others. When the several parts of invocation, adoration, confession, petition, &c. follow each other in a stated order, the hearer's mind generally goes before the speaker's voice, and we can form a tolerable conjecture what is to come next. On this account we often find, that unlettered people, who have had little or no help from books, or rather have not been fettered by them, can pray with an unction and savour in an unpremeditated way, while the prayers of persons of much superior abilities, perhaps even of ministers themselves, are, though accurate and regular, so dry and starched, that they afford little either of pleasure or profit to a spiritual mind. The spirit of prayer is the truth and token of the spirit of adoption. The studied addresses with which some approach the throne of grace, remind us of a stranger's coming to a great man's door; he knocks and waits, sends in his name, and goes through a course of ceremony before he gains admittance; while a child of the family uses no ceremony at all, but enters freely when he pleases, because he knows he is at home. It is true we ought always to draw near the Lord with great humiliation of spirit, and a sense of our unworthiness. But this spirit is not always best expressed or promoted by a pompous enumeration of the names and titles of the God with whom we have to do, or by fixing in our minds before hand, the exact order in which we propose to arrange the se-

veral parts of our prayer. Some attention to method may be proper, for the prevention of repetitions; and plain people may be a little defective in it sometimes; but this defect will not be half so tiresome and disagreeable as a studied and artificial exactness.

Many, perhaps most people, who pray in public, have some favourite word or expression which recurs too often in their prayers, and is frequently used as a mere expletive, having no necessary connection with the sense of what they are speaking. The most disagreeable of these is, when the name of the blessed God, with the addition of perhaps one or more epithets, as Great, Glorious, Holy, Almighty, &c. is introduced so often, and without necessity, as seems, neither to indicate a due reverence in the person who uses it, or suited to excite reverence in those who hear. I will not say, that this is taking the name of God in vain, in the usual sense of the phrase; it is, however, a great impropriety, and should be guarded against. It would be well if they who use redundant expressions, had a friend to give them a caution, as they might, with a little care, be retrenched; and hardly any person can be sensible of the little peculiarities he may inadvertently adopt, unless he is told of it.

There are several things likewise respecting the voice and manner of prayer, which a person may, with due care, correct in himself, and which, if generally corrected, would make meetings for prayer more pleasant, than they sometimes are. These I shall mention by pairs, as the happy and agreeable way is a medium between two inconvenient extremes.

Very loud speaking is a fault, when the size of the place, and the number of hearers do not render it necessary. The end of speaking is to be heard; and, when that end is attained, a greater elevation of the voice is frequently hurtful to the speaker, and is more likely to confuse a hearer than to fix his attention. I do not deny but allowance must be made for constitution, and the warmth of the passions, which dispose some persons to speak louder than others. Yet such will do well to restrain themselves as much as they can. It may seem indeed to indicate great earnestness, and that the heart is much affected; yet it is often but false fire. It may be thought speaking with power; but a person who is favoured with the Lord's presence may pray with power in a moderate voice; and there may be very little power of the Spirit, though the voice should be heard in the street and neighbourhood.

The other extreme, of speaking too low, is not so frequent; but if we are not heard, we might as well altogether hold our peace. It exhausts the spirits, and wearies the attention, to be listening for a length of time to a very low voice. Some words or sentences will be lost, which will render what is heard less intelligible and agreeable. If the speaker can be heard by the person farthest distant from him the rest will hear of course.

The tone of the voice is likewise to be regarded. Some have a tone in prayer, so very different from their usual way of speaking, that their nearest friends, if not accustomed to them, could hardly know them by their voice. Sometimes the tone is changed, perhaps more than once, so that if our eyes did not give us more certain information than our ears, we might think two or three persons had been speaking by turns. It is pity that when we approve what is spoken, we should be so easily disconcerted by an awkwardness of delivery; yet so it often is, and probably so it will be, in the present weak and imperfect state of human nature. It is more to be lamented than wondered at, that sincere Christians are sometimes forced to confess, "He is a good man, and his prayers, as to their substance, are spiritual and judicious; but there is something so displeasing in his manner, that I am always uneasy when I hear him."

Contrary to this, and still more offensive, is a custom that some have of talking to the Lord in prayer. It is their natural voice, indeed, but it is that expression of it which they use upon the most familiar and trivial occasions. The human voice is capable of so many inflexions and variations, that it can adapt itself to the different sensations of our mind, as joy, sorrow, fear, desire, &c. If a man was pleading for his life, or expressing his thanks to the king for a pardon, common sense and decency would teach him a suitableness of manner; and any one who could not understand his language, might know, by the sound of his words, that he was not making a bargain, or telling a story. How much more, when we speak to the King of kings, should the consideration of his glory, and our own vileness, and of the important concerns we are engaged in before him, impress us with an air of seriousness and reverence, and prevent us from speaking to him as if he was altogether such a one as ourselves? The liberty to which we are called by the gospel, does not at all encourage such a pertness and familiarity as would be unbecoming to use towards a fellow-worm who was a little advanced above us in worldly dignity.

I shall be glad if these hints may be of any service to those who desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and who wish that whatever has a tendency to damp the spirit of devotion, either in themselves or in others, might be avoided. It is a point of delicacy and difficulty to tell any one what we wish could be altered in his manner of prayer, but it can give no just offence to ask a friend, if he has read a letter on this subject, in "A Collection of Twenty-six Letters," published in 1775.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

ON CONTROVERSY

DEAR SIR,

As you are likely to be engaged in controversy, and your love of truth is joined with a natural warmth of temper, my friendship makes me solicitous on your behalf. You are of the strongest side; for truth is great, and must prevail; so that a person of abilities inferior to yours, might take the field with a confidence of victory. I am not therefore anxious for the event of the battle; but I would have you more than a conqueror, and to triumph not only over your adversary, but over yourself. If you cannot be vanquished, you may be wounded. To preserve you from such wounds as might give you cause of weeping over your conquests, I would present you with some considerations, which, if duly attended to, will do you the service of a coat of mail; such armour, that you need not complain, as David did of Saul's, that it will be more cumbersome than useful; for you will easily perceive it is taken from that great magazine provided for the christian soldier, the word of God. I take it for granted, that you will not expect any apology for my freedom, and therefore I shall not offer one. For method's sake, I may reduce my advice to three heads,—respecting your opponent, the public, and yourself.

As to your opponent, I wish, that before you set pen to paper against him, and during the whole time you are preparing your answer, you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing. This practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your heart to love and pity him; and such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write. If you account him a believer, though greatly mistaken in the subject of debate between you, the words of David to Joab, concerning Absalom, are very applicable: "Deal gently with him for my sake." The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore you must not despise him, or treat him harshly. The Lord bears with you likewise, and expects that you should show tenderness to others, from a sense of the much forgiveness you need yourself. In a little while you will meet in heaven; he will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have upon earth is to you now. Anticipate that period in your thoughts; and though you may find it necessary to oppose his errors, view him personally as a kindred soul, with whom you are to be happy in Christ for ever. But if you look upon him as an unconverted person, in a state of enmity against God and his grace (a supposition which, without good evidence, you should be very unwilling to admit), he is a more proper object of your compassion than of your anger. Alas! he knows not what he does: but you know who has made you to differ. If God, in his sovereign pleasure, had so appointed, you might have been as he is now; and he, instead of you, might have been set for the defence of the gospel. You were both equally blind by nature. If you attend to this, you will not reproach or hate him, because the Lord has been pleased to open your eyes, and not his. Of all people who engage in controversy, we, who are called Calvinists, are most expressly bound by our own principles to the exercise of gentleness and moderation. If, indeed, they who differ from us have a power of changing themselves, if they can open their own eyes, and soften their own hearts, then we might with less inconsistence be offended at their obstinacy; but if we believe the very contrary to this, our part is, not to strive, but in meekness to instruct those who oppose, "if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." If you write with a desire of being an instrument of correcting mistakes, you will of course be cautious of laying stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, or of using any expressions that may exasperate their passions, confirm them in their prejudices, and thereby make their conviction, humanly speaking, more impracticable.

By printing, you will appeal to the public, where your readers may be ranged under three divisions. First, such as differ from you in principle. Concerning these I may refer you to what I have already said. Though you have your eye upon one person chiefly, there are many like-minded with him and the same reasoning will hold, whether as to one or to a million. There will be likewise many who pay too little regard to religion, to have any settled system of their own, and yet are pre-engaged in favour of those sentiments which are least repugnant to the good opinion men naturally have of themselves. These are very incompetent judges of doctrines, but they can form a tolerable judgment of a writer's spirit. They know that meekness, humility, and love, are the characteristics of a christian temper; and though they affect to treat the doctrines of grace as mere notions and speculations, which, supposing they adopted them, would have no salutary influence upon their conduct; yet from us, who profess these principles, they always expect such dispositions as correspond with the precepts of the gospel. They are quick-sighted to discern when we deviate from such a spirit, and avail themselves of it to justify their contempt of our arguments. The scriptural maxim, That "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," is verified by daily observation. If our zeal is

embittered by expressions of anger, invective, or scorn, we may think we are doing service to the cause of truth, when in reality we shall only bring it into discredit. The weapons of our warfare, and which alone are powerful to break down the strong holds of error, are not carnal, but spiritual; arguments fairly drawn from scripture and experience, and enforced by such a mild address, as may persuade our readers, that, whether we can convince them or not, we wish well to their souls, and contend only for the truth's sake: if we can satisfy them that we act up to these motives, our point is half gained; they will be more disposed to consider calmly what we offer; and if they should still dissent from our opinions, they will be constrained to approve of our intentions.

You will have a third class of readers, who, being of your own sentiments, will readily approve of what you advance, and may be further established and confirmed in their views of scripture doctrines, by a clear and masterly elucidation of your subject. You may be instrumental to their edification, if the law of kindness, as well as of truth, regulates your pen, otherwise you may do them harm. There is a principle of self, which disposes us to despise those who differ from us; and we are often under its influence, when we think we are only shewing a becoming zeal in the cause of God. I readily believe, that the leading points of Arminianism spring from, and are nourished by, the pride of the human heart; but I should be glad if the reverse was always true; and that to embrace what are called the Calvinistic doctrines was an infallible token of an humble mind. I think I have known some Arminians, that is, persons who, for want of clearer light, have been afraid of receiving the doctrines of free grace, who yet have given evidence that their hearts were in a degree humbled before the Lord. And, I am afraid, there are Calvinists, who, while they account it a proof of their humility, that they are willing, in words, to debase the creature, and to give all the glory of salvation to the Lord, yet know not what manner of spirit they are of. Whatever it be that makes us trust in ourselves that we are comparatively wise or good, so as to treat those with contempt who do not subscribe to our doctrines, or follow our party, is a proof and fruit of a self-righteous spirit. Self-righteousness can feed upon doctrines, as well as upon works; and a man may have the heart of a Pharisee, while his head is stored with orthodox notions of the unworthiness of the creature, and the riches of free grace. Yea, I would add, the best of men are not wholly free from this leaven; and therefore are too apt to be pleased with such representations as hold up our adversaries to ridicule, and, by consequence flatter our own superior judgments. Controversies, for the most part, are so managed as to indulge, rather than to repress this wrong disposition; and, therefore, generally speaking, they are productive of little good. They provoke those whom they should convince, and puff up those whom they should edify. I hope your performance will savour of a spirit of true humility, and be a means of promoting it in others.

This leads me, in the last place, to consider your own concern in your present undertaking. It seems a laudable service to defend the faith once delivered to the saints; we are commanded to contend earnestly for it, and to convince gainsayers. If ever such defences were seasonable and expedient, they appear to be so in our day, when errors abound on all sides, and every truth of the gospel is either directly denied, or grossly misrepresented. And yet we find but very few writers of controversy who have not been manifestly hurt by it. Either they grow in a sense of their own importance, or imbibe an angry, contentious spirit, or they insensibly withdraw their attention from those things which are the food, and immediate support of the life of faith, and spend their time and strength upon matters, which at most, are but of a secondary value. This shews, that if the service is honourable, it is dangerous. What will it profit a man, if he gain his cause, and silence his adversary, if, at the same time, he loses that humble, tender frame of spirit in which the Lord delights, and to which the promise of his presence is made? Your aim, I doubt not, is good; but you have need to watch and pray, for you will find Satan at your right hand, to resist you. He will try to debase your views; and though you set out in defence of the cause of God, if you are not continually looking to the Lord to keep you, it may become your own cause, and awaken in you those tempers which are inconsistent with true peace of mind, and will surely obstruct communion with God. Be upon your guard against admitting any thing personal into the debate. If you think you have been ill treated, you will have an opportunity of shewing that you are a disciple of Jesus, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." This is our pattern, thus we are to speak and write for God, "not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that hereunto we are called." The wisdom that is from above is not only pure, but peaceable and gentle; and the want of these qualifications, like the dead fly in the pot of ointment, will spoil the savour and efficacy of our labours. If we act in a wrong spirit, we shall bring little glory to God, do little good to our fellow-creatures, and procure neither honour nor comfort to ourselves. If you can be content with shewing your wit, and gaining the laugh on your side, you have an easy task; but I hope you have a far nobler aim, and

that, sensible of the solemn importance of gospel-truths, and the compassion due to the souls of men, you would rather be a means of removing prejudices in a single instance, than obtain the empty applause of thousands. Go forth, therefore, in the name and strength of the Lord of Hosts, speaking the truth in love; and may he give you a witness in many hearts, that you are taught of God, and favoured with the unction of his Holy Spirit.

I am, &c.

LETTER XX.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

DEAR SIR,

You will, perhaps, be surprised to see my thoughts on your query in print, rather than to receive them by post, as you expected. But as the subject of it is of general concern, I hope that you will not be displeased that I have taken this method. It would do honour to the pen of an able casuist, and might be of considerable service in the present day, clearly to explain the force of the apostle's precept, "Be not conformed to this world;" and to state the just boundary between a sinful compliance with the world, and that scrupulous singularity which springs from a self-righteous principle, and a contracted view of the spirit and liberty of the gospel. To treat this point accurately, would require a treatise, rather than a letter; I only undertake to offer you a few hints; and, indeed, when the mind is formed to a spiritual taste, a simple desire to be guided by the word and Spirit of God, together with a due attention to our own experience, will, in most practical cases, supersede the necessity of long and elaborate disquisitions.

By the world, in the passage alluded to, Rom. xii. 2. I suppose the apostle means the men of the world, in distinction from believers; these, not having the love of God in their hearts, or his fear before their eyes, are, of course, engaged in such pursuits and practices as are inconsistent with our holy calling, and in which we cannot imitate or comply with them, without hurting our peace and our profession. We are, therefore, bound to avoid conformity to them in all such instances; but we are not obliged to decline all intercourse with the world, or to impose restraints upon ourselves, when the scriptures do not restrain us, in order to make us as unlike the world as possible. To instance in a few particulars:

It is not necessary, perhaps, it is not lawful, wholly to renounce the society of the world. A mistake of this kind took place in the early ages of christianity, and men (at first, perhaps, with a sincere desire of serving God without distraction) withdrew into deserts and uninhabited places, and wasted their lives at a distance from their fellow-creatures. But unless we could flee from ourselves likewise, this would afford us no advantage; so long as we carry our own wicked hearts with us, we shall be exposed to temptation, go where we will. Besides, this would be thwarting the end of our vocation. Christians are to be the salt and the light of the world, conspicuous as cities set upon a hill; they are commanded to "let their light shine before men, that they, beholding their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven." This injudicious deviation from the paths of nature and providence, gave occasion, at length, to the vilest abominations; and men, who withdrew from the world under the pretence of retirement, became the more wicked and abandoned, as they lived more out of public view and observation.

Nor are we at liberty, much less are we enjoined, to renounce the duties of relative life, so as to become careless in the discharge of them. Allowances should, indeed, be made for the distresses of persons newly awakened, or under the power of temptation, which may, for a time, so much engross their thoughts, as greatly to indispose them for their bounden duty. But in general, the proper evidence of true christians, is, not merely that they can talk about divine things, but that, by the grace of God, they live and act agreeable to the rules of his word, in the state in which his providence has placed them, whether as masters or servants, husbands or wives, parents or children: bearing rule, or yielding obedience, as in his sight. Diligence and fidelity in the management of temporal concernments, though observable in the practice of many worldly men, may be maintained without a sinful conformity to the world.

Neither are we required to refuse a moderate use of the comforts and conveniencies of life, suitable to the station which God has appointed us in the world. The spirit of self-righteousness and will-worship works much in this way, and supposes that there is something excellent in long fastings, in abstaining from pleasant food, in wearing meaner clothes than is customary with those in the same rank of life, and in many other austerities and singularities not commanded by the word of God. And many persons, who are in the main sincere, are grievously burdened with scruples respecting the use of lawful things. It is true, there is need of a constant watch, lest what is lawful in itself become hurtful to us by its abuse. But these outward strictnesses may be carried to great lengths, without a spark of true grace, and even without the knowledge of the true God. The mortifications and austerities practised by the Bramins in India (if the accounts we have of them be true) are vastly more severe than the

most zealous effects of modern superstition in our country. There is a strictness which arises rather from ignorance than knowledge, is wholly conversant about externals, and gratifies the spirit of self as much in one way as it seems to retrench it in another. A man may almost starve his body to feed his pride; but to those who fear and serve the Lord, every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the precept is very extensive and important. "Be not conformed to the world." As believers, we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth. Heaven is our country, and the Lord is our King. We are to be known and noticed as his subjects, and, therefore, it is his pleasure, that we do not speak the language, or adopt the customs of the land in which we sojourn. We are not to conform to the world, as we did in the days of our ignorance. And though we have received the principles of grace, and have tasted of the goodness of the Lord, the admonition is still needful; for we are renewed but in part, and are liable to be drawn aside to our hurt, by the prevalence of evil examples and customs around us.

We must not conform to the spirit of the world. As members of society, we have a part to act in it, in common with others. But if our business is the same, our principles and ends are to be entirely different. Diligence in our respective callings is, as I have already observed, commendable, and our duty; but not with the same views which stimulate the activity of the men of the world. If they rise early, and take rest late, their endeavours spring from, and terminate in self, to establish and increase their own importance, to add house to house, and field to field, that, like the builders of Babel, they may get themselves a name, or provide means for the gratification of their sinful passions. If they succeed, they sacrifice to their own net; if they are crossed in their designs, they are filled with anxiety and impatience; they either murmur or despond. But a christian is to pursue his lawful calling with an eye to the providence of God, and with submission to his wisdom. Thus, so far as he acts in the exercise of faith, he cannot be disappointed. He casts his care upon his heavenly Father, who has promised to take care of him. What he gives, he receives with thankfulness, and is careful, as a faithful steward, to improve it for the furtherance of the cause of God, and the good of mankind; and if he meets with losses and crosses, he is not disconcerted, knowing that all his concerns are under a divine direction; that the Lord, whom he serves, chuses for him better than he could chuse for himself; and that his best treasure is safe, out of the reach of the various changes to which all things in the present state are liable.

We must not conform to the maxims of the world. The world, in various instances, calls evil good, and good evil. But we are to have recourse to the law and to the testimony, and to judge of things by the unerring word of God, uninfluenced by the determination of the great, or the many. We are to obey God rather than man, though, upon this account, we may expect to be despised or reviled, to be made a gazing-stock or a laughing-stock to those who set his authority at defiance. We must bear our testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, avow the cause of his despised people, and walk in the practice of universal obedience, patiently endure reproaches and labour to overcome evil with good. Thus we shall shew that we are not ashamed of him. And there is an hour coming, when he will not be ashamed of us, who have followed him, and borne his cross, in the midst of a perverse generation, but will own our worthless names before the assembled world.

We must not conform to the world in their amusements and diversions. We are to mix with the world so far as our necessary and providential connections engage us; so far as we have a reasonable expectation of doing, or getting good, and no further. "What fellowship hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" What call can a believer have into those places and companies, where every thing tends to promote a spirit of dissipation; where the fear of God has no place; where things are purposely disposed to inflame, or indulge corrupt and sinful appetites and passions, and to banish all serious thoughts of God and ourselves? If it is our duty to redeem time, to walk with God, to do all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to follow the example which he set us when he was upon earth, and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; it must of course be our duty to avoid a conformity with the world in those vain and sensual diversions, which stand in as direct contradiction to a spiritual frame of mind as darkness to light.

The leading desires of every person under the influence of gospel-principles, will be to maintain a habitual communion with God in his own soul, and to manifest the power of his grace in the sight of men. So far as a christian is infected by a conformity to the spirit, maxims, and sinful customs of the world, these desires will be disappointed. Fire and water are not more opposite than that peace of God which passeth all understanding, and that poor precarious pleasure which is sought in a compliance with the world; a pleasure (if worthy the name) which grieves the Spirit of God and stupifies the heart. Whoever, after having tasted that the Lord is gracious, has been

prevailed on to make the experiment, and to mingle with the world's vanities, has certainly thereby brought a damp upon his experience, and indisposed himself for the exercise of prayer, and the contemplation of divine truths. And if any are not sensible of a difference in this respect, it is because the poison has taken a still deeper effect, so as to benumb their spiritual senses. Conformity to the world is the bane of many professors in this day. They have found a way, as they think, to serve both God and mammon. But because they are double-minded, they are unstable; they make no progress; and notwithstanding their frequent attendance upon ordinances, they are lean from day to day; a form of godliness, a scheme of orthodox notions they may attain to, but they will remain destitute of the life, power, and comfort of religion, so long as they cleave to those things which are incompatible with it.

Conformity to the world is equally an obstruction in the way of those who profess a desire of glorifying God in the sight of men. Such professors do rather dishonour him; by their conduct, as far as in them lies, they declare, that they do not find the religion of the gospel answer their expectations; that it does not afford them the satisfaction they once hoped for from it; and that therefore they are forced to seek relief from the world. They grieve the people of God by their compliances, and oftimes they mislead the weak, and, by their examples encourage them to venture upon the like liberties, which otherwise they durst not have attempted. They embolden the wicked likewise in their evil ways, while they see a manifest inconsistence between their avowed principles and their practice; and thus they cause the ways of truth to be evil spoken of.—The paper constrains me to conclude abruptly. May the Lord enable you and me to lay this subject to heart, and to pray that we may, on the one hand, rightly understand and prize our christian liberty; and, on the other hand, be preserved from that growing evil, a conformity to the world.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXI.

"I WAS ONCE BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE."

DEAR SIR,

THE question, What is the discriminating characteristic nature of a work of grace upon the soul? has been upon my mind; if I am able to give you satisfaction concerning it, I shall think my time well employed.

The reason why men in a natural state are utterly ignorant of spiritual truths, is, that they are wholly destitute of a faculty suited to their perception. A remarkable instance we have of it in the absurd construction which Nicodemus put upon what our Lord had spoken to him concerning the new birth. And in the supernatural communication of this spiritual faculty, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, I apprehend the inimitable and abiding criterion, which is the subject of our inquiry, does, primarily consist. Those passages of scripture wherein the gospel-truth is compared to light, lead to a familiar illustration of my meaning. Men, by nature, are stark blind with respect to this light; by grace the eyes of the understanding are opened. Among a number of blind men, some may be more ingenious and of better capacity than others. They may be better qualified for such studies and employments which do not require eye-sight, than many who can see, and may attain to considerable skill in them; but with respect to the true nature of light and colours, they are all exactly upon a level. A blind man, if ingenious and inquisitive, may learn to talk about the light, the sun, or the rainbow, in terms borrowed from those who have seen them; but it is impossible that he can have (I mean a man born blind) a just idea of either; and whatever hear-say knowledge he may have acquired, he can hardly talk much upon these subjects without betraying his real ignorance. The case of one mentioned by Mr. Locke has been often quoted. He believed, that after much inquiry and reflection, he had at last found out what scarlet was; and being asked to explain himself, "I think," says he, "scarlet has something like the sound of a trumpet." This man had about the same knowledge of natural light as Nicodemus had of spiritual. Nor can all the learning or study in the world enable any person to form a suitable judgment of divine truth, till the eyes of his mind are opened, and then he will perceive it at once.

Indeed this comparison is well suited to shew the entire difference between nature and grace, and to explain the ground of that enmity and scorn which fills the hearts of blinded sinners, against those who profess to have been enlightened by the Spirit of God. The reason why blind men are not affronted when we tell them they cannot see, seems to be, that they are borne down by the united testimony of all who are about them. Every one talks of seeing; and they find by experience, that those who say they can see can do many things which the blind cannot. Some such conviction as this many have, who live where the gospel is preached, and is made the power of God to the salvation of others. The conversation and conduct of the people of God convinces them, that there is a difference, though they cannot tell, wherein it consists. But if we would suppose it possible, that there was a whole nation of blind men, and one or two persons should go amongst them, and profess that they could see, while they could not offer them such a proof

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Indeed this comparison is well suited to shew the entire difference between nature and grace, and to explain the ground of that enmity and scorn which fills the hearts of blinded sinners, against those who profess to have been enlightened by the Spirit of God. The reason why blind men are not affronted when we tell them they cannot see, seems to be, that they are borne down by the united testimony of all who are about them. Every one talks of seeing; and they find by experience, that those who say they can see can do many things which the blind cannot. Some such conviction as this many have, who live where the gospel is preached, and is made the power of God to the salvation of others. The conversation and conduct of the people of God convinces them, that there is a difference, though they cannot tell, wherein it consists. But if we would suppose it possible, that there was a whole nation of blind men, and one or two persons should go amongst them, and profess that they could see, while they could not offer them such a proof

most as assertion as they were capable of re-ouring, nor even explain, to their satisfaction, what they meant by sight; what may we imagine would be the consequence? I think there is little doubt but these innovators would experience much the same treatment as the believers of Jesus often meet with from a blind world. The blind people would certainly hate and despise them for presuming to pretend to what they had not. They would try to dispute them out of their senses, and bring many arguments to prove, that there could be no such thing as either light or sight. They would say, as many say now, How is it if these things are so, that we should know nothing of them? Yea, I think it probable, they would rise against them as deceivers and enthusiasts, and disturbers of the public peace, and say, "Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit that they should live." But if we should suppose further, that during the heat of the contest, some of these blind men should have their eyes suddenly opened, the dispute as to them would be at an end in a minute: they would confess their former ignorance and obstinacy, confirm the testimony of those whom they had before despised, and of course share in the same treatment from their blind brethren, perhaps be treated still worse, as apostates from the opinion of the public.

If this illustration is justly applicable to our subject, it may lead us to several observations, or inferences, which have a tendency to confirm what we are elsewhere expressly taught by the word of God.

In the first place, it shews, that regeneration, or that great change without which a man cannot see the kingdom of God, is the effect of almighty power. Neither education, endeavours, or arguments, can open the eyes of the blind. It is God alone, who at first caused light to shine out of darkness, who can shine into our hearts "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." People may attain some natural ideas of spiritual truths by reading books, or hearing sermons, and may thereby become wise in their own conceits: they may learn to imitate the language of an experienced christian; but they know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, and are as distant from the true meaning of the terms, as a blind man who pronounces the words blue or red, is from the ideas which those words raise in the mind of a person who can distinguish colours by his sight. And from hence we may infer the sovereignty as well as the efficacy of grace; since it is evident, not only that the objective light, the word of God, is not afforded universally to all men; but that those who enjoy the same outward means have not all the same perceptions. There are many who stumble in the noon-day, not for want of light but for want of eyes; and they who now see, were once blind even as others, and had neither power nor will to enlighten their own minds. It is a mercy, however, when people are so far sensible of their own blindness as to be willing to wait for the manifestation of the Lord's power, in the ordinances of his own appointment. He came into the world, and he sends forth his gospel, that those who see not may see; and when there is a desire raised in the heart for spiritual sight, it shall in his due time be answered.

From hence likewise we may observe the proper use and value of the preaching of the gospel, which is the great instrument by which the Holy Spirit opens the blind eyes. Like the rod of Moses, it owes all its efficacy to the appointment and promise of God. Ministers cannot be too earnest in the discharge of their office; it behoves them to use all diligence to find out acceptable words, and to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Yet when they have done all, they have done nothing, unless their word is accompanied to the heart by the power and demonstration of the Spirit. Without this blessing, an apostle might labour in vain: but it shall be in a measure afforded to all who preach the truth in love, in simplicity, and in an humble dependence upon him who alone can give success. This, in a great measure, puts all faithful ministers on a level, notwithstanding any seeming disparity in gifts and abilities. Those who have a lively and pathetic talent may engage the ear, and raise the natural passions of their hearers; but they cannot reach the heart. The blessing may be rather expected to attend the humble than the voluble speaker.

Further we may remark, that there is a difference in kind, between the highest attainments of nature, and the effects of grace in the lowest degree. Many are convinced, who are not truly enlightened; are afraid of the consequences of sin, though they never saw its evil; have a seeming desire of salvation, which is not founded upon a truly spiritual discovery of their own wretchedness, and the excellency of Jesus. These may, for a season, hear the word with joy, and walk in the way of professors; but we need not be surprised if they do not hold out, for they have not root. Though many shall fall, the foundation of God still standeth sure. We may confidently affirm, upon the warrant of scripture, that they who, having for a while escaped the pollutions of the world, are again habitually entangled in them, or who, having been distressed upon the account of sin, can find relief in a self-righteous course, and stop short of Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" we may affirm, that these, whatever profession they may have made, were never capable of receiving the beauty and glory of the gospel-salvation. On the other hand, though where the eyes are divinely enlightened, the soul's

first views of itself and of the gospel may be confused and indistinct, like him who saw men as it were trees walking; yet this light is like the dawn, which, though weak and faint at its first appearance, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is the work of God; and his work is perfect in kind, though progressive in the manner. He will not despise or forsake the day of small things. When he thus begins, he will make an end; and such persons, however feeble, poor, and worthless, in their own apprehensions, if they have obtained a glimpse of the Redeemer's glory, as he is made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that his name is precious, and the desire of their hearts is towards him, have good reason to hope and believe, as the wife of Manoah did in a similar case, that if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shewed them such things as these.

Once more, this spiritual sight and faculty is that which may be principally considered as inherent in a believer. He has no stock of grace, or comfort, or strength, in himself. He needs continual supplies; and if the Lord withdraws from him, he is as weak and unskilful, after he has been long engaged in the christian warfare, as he was when he first entered upon it. The eye is of little present use in the dark; for it cannot see without light. But the return of light is no advantage to a blind man. A believer may be much in the dark; but his spiritual sight remains. Though the exercise of grace may be low, he knows himself, he knows the Lord, he knows the way of access to a throne of grace. His frames and feelings may alter; but he has received such a knowledge of the person and offices, the power and grace, of Jesus the Saviour, as cannot be taken from him; and could withstand even an angel that should preach another gospel, because he has seen the Lord.—The paper constrains me to break off. May the Lord increase his light in your heart, and in the heart of, &c.

Jan 17 - 1784

LETTER XXII.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF A STATE OF POVERTY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

CONFESS myself almost ashamed to write to ou. You are pinched by poverty, suffer the ant of many things; and your faith is often arply tried, when you look at your family, d, perhaps, can hardly conceive how you all be able to supply them with bread to e end of the week. The Lord has appointd me a different lot. I am favoured, not ly with the necessaries, but with the comts of life. Now, I could easily give you plenty of good advice; I could tell you, it is your duty to be patient, and even thankful, in the lowest state; that if you have bread and water, it is more than you deserve at the Lord's hands; and that, as you are out of hell, and made a partaker of the hope of the gospel, you ought not to think any thing hard that you meet with in the way to heaven. If I should say thus, and say no more, you would not dispute the truth of my assertions; but, as coming from me, who live at ease, to you, who are beset with difficulties, you might question their propriety, and think that I know but little of my own heart, and could feel but little for your distress. You would probably compare me to one who should think himself a mariner, because he had studied the art of navigation by the fireside, though he had never seen the sea. Yet I hope, by my frequent converse with the Lord's poor (for I live in the midst of an afflicted and poor people), I have made some observations, which, though not strictly the fruit of my own experience, may not be wholly unseasonable or unacceptable to you.

Whether the rich or the poor, who live without God in the world, are most to be pitied, is not easy to determine. It is a dreadful case to be miserable in both worlds; but yet the parade and seeming prosperity in which some live for a few years, will be no abatement, but rather a great aggravation, of their future torment. A madman is equally to be pitied, whether he is laid upon a bed of state or a bed of straw. Madness is in the heart of every unregenerate sinner; and the more he possesses of this world's goods, he is so much the more extensively mischievous. Poverty is so far a negative good to those who have no other restraint, that it confines the effects of the evil heart within narrower bounds, and the small circle of their immediate connections; whereas the rich, who live under the power of sin, are unfaithful stewards of a larger trust, and, by their pernicious influence, are often instrumental in diffusing profaneness and licentiousness through a country or a kingdom, besides the innumerable acts of oppression, and the ravages of war, which are perpetrated to gratify the insatiable demands of luxury, ambition, and pride. But to leave this, if we turn our eyes from the false maxims of the world, and weigh things in the balance of the sanctuary, I believe we shall find that the believing poor, though they have many trials which call for our compassion, have some advantages above those of the Lord's people to whom he has given a larger share of the good things of the present life. Why else does the apostle say, "God hath chosen the poor?" or why do we see, in fact, that so few of the rich, or wise, or mighty, are called? Certainly he does not chuse them because they are poor; for "he is no respecter of persons:" rather, I think, we may say, that know-

ing what is in their hearts, the nature of the world through which they are to pass, and what circumstances are best suited to manifest the truth and efficacy of his grace, he has, in the general, chosen poverty as the best state for them. Some exceptions he has made, that his people may not be wholly without support and countenance, and that the sufficiency of his grace may be made known in every state of life; but, for the most part, they are a poor and afflicted people; and in this appointment he has had a regard to their honour, their safety, and their comfort. I have room for but a very brief illustration of these particulars.

Sanctified poverty is an honourable state; not so, indeed, in the judgment of the world. The rich have many friends; the poor are usually despised. But I am speaking of that honour which cometh from God only. The poor, who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," are honoured with the nearest external conformity to Jesus, their Saviour, who, though he was Lord of all, was pleased, for our sakes, to make himself so poor, that he had not where to lay his head, and submitted to receive assistance from the contributions of his followers, Luke viii. 3. By this astonishing humiliation, he poured contempt upon all human glory, and made the state of poverty honourable; and now, "he that reproacheth the poor despiseth his Maker." And as he was, so were his apostles in this world. They were not only destitute of rank, titles, and estates, but were often in hunger and nakedness, and had no certain dwelling-place. To infer from hence, as some have done, that riches, and the accommodations of life, are unsuitable to the state of a christian, is the mark of a superstitious and legal spirit. There were, in those days, several believers that were in a state of affluence, as, for instance, Theophilus, whom Luke addresses by a title of honour, κρατιστε (most noble, or excellent), the same which St. Paul ascribes to the Roman governor. But we may safely infer, that that state of life in which our Lord was pleased to converse with men, and which was the lot of his apostles, and most favoured servants, is honourable in the sight of God.

Again, poverty is honourable, because it affords a peculiar advantage for glorifying God, and evidencing the power of his grace, and the faithfulness of his promises, in the sight of men. A believer, if rich, lives by faith, and his faith meets with various trials. He himself knows by whom he stands; but it is not ordinarily so visible to others, as in the case of the poor. When ministers speak of the all-sufficiency of God to those who trust in him, and the certain effect of the principles of the gospel, in supporting, satisfying, and regulating the mind of man, the poor are the best and most unsuspected witnesses for the truth of their doctrine. If we are asked, Where do these wonderful people live, who can delight themselves in God, esteem a day in his courts better than a thousand, and prefer the light of his countenance to all earthly joy? we can confidently send them to the poor of the flock. Amongst the number who are so called, there are some who will not disappoint our appeal. Let the world, who refuse to believe the preachers, believe their own eyes; and when they see a poor person content, thankful, rejoicing, admiring the Lord's goodness for affording him what they account hard fare, and, in the midst of various pressures, incapable of being bribed by offers, or terrified by threats, to swerve a step from the path of known duty, let them acknowledge that this is the finger of God. If they harden themselves against this evidence, "neither would they be persuaded, though one should arise from the dead."

And as poverty is an honourable, so it is comparatively a safe state. True, it is attended with its peculiar temptations; but it is not near so suitable to draw forth and nourish the two grand corruptions of the heart, self-importance, and an idolatrous cleaving to the world, as the opposite state of riches. They who are rich in this world, and who know the Lord and their own hearts, feel the wisdom and propriety of the apostle's charge, "Not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches." If poor believers consider the snares to which their rich brethren are exposed, they will rather pray for and pity, than envy them. Their path is slippery; they have reason to cry continually, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe;" for they live in the midst of the hurries and vanities of the world, are engaged in a large sphere of action, and are incessantly exposed to interruptions and snares. The carriage of all around them reminds them of their supposed consequence; and, by the nature of their situation, they are greatly precluded from plain dealing and friendly advice. But the poor are not surrounded with flatterers, nor teazed with impertinencies. They meet with little to stimulate their pride, or to soothe their vanity. They not only believe in their judgments, but are constrained to feel, by the experience of every day, that this world cannot afford them rest. If they have food and raiment, and grace therewith to be content, they have reason to be thankful for an exemption from those splendid cares and delusive appearances, which are the inseparable attendants of wealth and worldly distinction, and which, if not more burdensome, are, humanly speaking, much more dangerous, and greater impediments to the progress of a spiritual life, than the ordinary trials of the poor.

The believing poor have likewise, for the most part, the advantage in point of spiritual comfort, and that principally in two respects.

First, As they are called to a life of more immediate dependence upon the promise and providence of God (having little else to trust to), they have a more direct and frequent experience of his interposition in their favour. Obadiah was a servant of God, though he lived in the court of Ahab. He, doubtless, had his difficulties in such a situation; but he was not in want. He had not only enough for himself in a time of dearth, but was able to impart to others. We may believe that he well knew he was indebted to the Lord's goodness for his provision; but he could hardly have so sweet, so strong, so sensible an impression of God's watchful care over him as Elijah had, who, when he was deprived of all human support, was statedly fed by the ravens. Such of the Lord's people who have estates in land, or thousands in the bank, will acknowledge, that even the bread they eat is the gift of the Lord's bounty; yet, having a moral certainty of a provision for life, I should apprehend that they cannot exercise faith in the divine providence, with respect to their temporal supplies, so distinctly as the poor, who, having no friend or resource upon earth, are necessitated to look immediately to their Father, who is in heaven, for their daily bread. And though it is not given to the world to know what an intercourse is carried on between heaven and earth, nor with what acceptance the prayers of the poor and afflicted enter into the ears of the Lord of hosts; yet many of them have had such proofs of his attention, wisdom, faithfulness, power, and love, in supplying their wants, and opening them a way of relief, when they have been beset with difficulties on all sides, as have been, to themselves at least, no less certain and indisputable, I had almost said, no less glorious, than the miracles which he wrought for Israel, when he divided the Red Sea before them, and gave them food from the clouds. Such evidences of the power of faith, the efficacy of prayer, and the truth of the scriptures (preferable to mountains of gold and silver, and for which the state of poverty furnishes the most frequent occasions), are a rich overbalance for all its inconveniencies. But,

Secondly, I apprehend that the humble and believing poor have, in general, the greatest share of those consolations, which are the effect of the light of God's countenance lifted up upon the soul, of his love shed abroad in the heart, or of a season of refreshment from his presence. By such expressions as these, the scriptures intimate that "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" a description of which, those who have tasted it will not require, and those who are strangers to it, could not understand. This joy is not always the common of faith, not even of strong faith; but it is that which a believer, whether rich or poor, incessantly thirsts after; and, in comparison whereof, all worldly good is but vanity and disappointment. The Lord imparts this joy to his people, in season and measure, as he sees fit; but his poor people have the largest share. They have little comfort from the world, therefore, he is pleased to be their comforter. They have many trials and sufferings; and he with whom they have to do, knows their situation and pressures: he has promised to make their strength equal to their day, and to revive their fainting spirits with heavenly cordials. When it is thus with them, they can say with Jacob, "I have enough;" or, as it is in the orginal, "I have all." This makes hard things easy, and the burden light, which the flesh would otherwise complain of as heavy. This has often given a sweeter relish to bread and water, than the sensualist ever found to be in the most studied and expensive refinements of luxury. Blessed are the poor, who are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him. They often enjoy the most lively foretastes of the glory which shall be revealed.

Have not you, my friend, found these things true in your own experience? Yes; the Lord has sanctified your crosses, and supported you under them. Hitherto he has helped you, and he will be with you to the end. As you have followed him upon earth, you will ere long follow him to heaven. You are now called to sow in tears; there you shall reap in joy, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes. In the mean time, be thankful that he honours you, in appointing you to be a witness for the truth and power of his grace, in the midst of an unbelieving world.

It is true, that even where the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. You have sharp trials, which, for the present, cannot be joyous, but grievous; and you have doubtless felt the depravity of your nature, and the subtilty of Satan, at some times prompting you to impatience, envy, and distrust. But these evils are not peculiar to a state of poverty; you would have been exposed to the same had you lived in affluence, together with many others, from which you are now exempted; for riches and poverty are but comparative terms, and it is only the grace of God that can teach us to be content in any possible situation of life. The rich are as prone to desire something which they have not as the poor; and they who have most to lose have most to fear. That a man's life (the happiness of his life) "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," is an aphorism founded upon the highest authority, and confirmed by universal experience and observation.

In a word, you are not poor, but rich. The promises are your inheritance; heaven is your home; the angels of the Lord are ministering spirits, who rejoice to watch over you for good; and the Lord of angels himself is your

sun, and shield, and everlasting portion. It is impossible that you, to whom he has given Himself, his Son, his Spirit, his grace, his kingdom, can want any thing that is truly good for you. If riches were so, he could pour them upon you in abundance, as easily as he provides you your daily bread. But these, for the most part, he bestows on those who have no portion but in the present life. You have great reason to rejoice in the lot he has appointed for you, which secures you from numberless imaginary wants and real dangers, and furnishes you with the fairest opportunities for the manifestation, exercise, and increase of the graces he has implanted in you.—Influenced by these views, I trust you can cheerfully say,

> What others value I resign:
> Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine.

I commend you to the blessing of our covenant God, and to Jesus our Saviour, who, when he was rich, made himself poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be rich.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

ON SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY.

DEAR SIR,

IT would be a happy time if all professors of the gospel could, with the apostle, rejoice in the testimony of their consciences, that they walked in simplicity and godly sincerity. How many evils and scandals would be then prevented! But, alas! too many who name the name of Christ, seem to have hardly any idea of this essential part of the christian character. A few thoughts upon a subject so little attended to, may not be unseasonable. The most advanced in the christian life have something of this lesson yet to learn; and the greater proficiency we make in it, the greater will be our inward peace, and the more will our light shine before men, to the glory of our heavenly Father.

Simplicity and sincerity, though inseparable, may be distinguished. The former is the principle from which the latter is derived. Simplicity primarily respects the frame of our spirit in the sight of God; sincerity more directly regards our conduct as it falls under the observation of men. It is true, the terms are frequently used indifferently for each other, and may be so without occasioning any considerable mistake; but as they are not precisely the same, it may be proper, if we would speak accurately, to keep this distinction in view.

Some persons, who have been more enamoured with the name of simplicity, than acquainted with its nature, have substituted in its stead a childishness of language and manners, as if they understood the word simple only in the mere vulgar sense, as equivalent to foolish. But this infantine softness gives just disgust to those who have a true taste and judgment of divine things; not only as it is an unnecessary deviation from the common usages of mankind, but because, being the effect of art and imitation, it palpably defeats its own pretences. An artificial, or affected simplicity, is a contradiction in terms, and differs as much from the simplicity of the gospel, as paint does from beauty.

The true simplicity, which is the honour and strength of a believer, is the effect of a spiritual perception of the truths of the gospel. It arises from, and bears a proportion to, the sense we have of our own unworthiness, the power and grace of Christ, and the greatness of our obligations to him. So far as our knowledge of these things is vital and experimental, it will make us simple-hearted. This simplicity may be considered in two respects,—a simplicity of intention, and a simplicity of dependence. The former stands in opposition to the corrupt workings of self, the latter to the false reasonings of unbelief.

Simplicity of intention implies, that we have but one leading aim, to which it is our deliberate and unreserved desire, that every thing else in which we are concerned may be subordinate and subservient; in a word, that we are devoted to the Lord, and have, by grace, been enabled to chuse him, and to yield ourselves to him, so as to place our happiness in his favour, and to make his glory and will the ultimate scope of all our actions. He well deserves this from us. He is the all-sufficient good. He alone is able to satisfy the vast capacity he has given us; for he formed us for himself: and they who have tasted that he is gracious, know that his "loving-kindness is better than life;" and that his presence and fulness can supply the want, or make up the loss of all creature-comforts. So likewise, he has a just claim to us that we should be wholly his; for besides that, as his creatures, we are in his hand as clay in the hands of the potter, he has a redemption title to us. He loved us, and bought us with his own blood. He did not hesitate or halt between two opinions, when he engaged to redeem our souls from the curse of the law, and the power of Satan. He could, in the hour of his distress, have summoned legions of angels, had that been needful, to his assistance, or have destroyed his enemies with a word or a look; he could easily have saved himself; but how then could his people have been saved, or the promises of the scriptures have been fulfilled? Therefore he willingly endured the cross, he gave his back to the smiters, he poured out his blood, he laid down his life. Here was an adorable simplicity of intention in him; and

shall we not, O thou lover of souls, be simply, heartily, and wholly thine? Shall we refuse the cup of affliction from thy hand, or for thy sake? Or shall we desire to drink of the cup of sinful pleasure, when we remember what our sins have cost thee? Shall we wish to be loved by the world that hated thee, or to be admired by the world that despised thee? Shall we be ashamed of professing our attachment to such a Saviour? Nay, Lord forbid it. Let thy love constrain us, let thy name be glorified, and thy will be done by us and in us. Let us count all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us not desire any thing thou seest fit to withhold, nor repine to part with what thou callest for; nor even take pleasure in what thou bestowest, unless we can improve it for thee, and ever prefer thy love above our chief temporal joy! Such is the language of the heart that is blessed with gospel-simplicity. It was once the stronghold of sin, the throne of self: but now self is cast down, and Jesus rules by the golden sceptre of love. This principle preserves the soul from low, sordid, and idolatrous pursuits, will admit of no rival near the Beloved, nor will it yield either to the bribes or threats of the world.

There is likewise a simplicity of dependence. Unbelief is continually starting objections, magnifying and multiplying difficulties. But faith in the power and promises of God, inspires a noble simplicity, and casts every care upon him, who is able, and has engaged to support and provide. Thus, when Abraham, at the Lord's call, forsook his country and his father's house, the apostle observes, "He went out, not knowing whether he went." It was enough that he knew whom he followed. The all-sufficient God was his guide, his shield, and his exceeding great reward. So, when exercised with long waiting for the accomplishment of the promise, he staggered not, διεκρίθη, he did not dispute or question, but simply depended upon God, who had spoken and was able also to perform. So likewise, when he received that hard command, to offer up his son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," he simply obeyed, and depended upon the Lord to make good his own word, Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. In this spirit David went forth to meet Goliah, and overcame him; and thus the three worthies were moved by the threats of Nebuchadnezzar, and rather chose to be cast into a burning furnace, than to sin against the Lord. And thus Elijah, in a time of famine, was preserved from anxiety and want, and supported by extraordinary methods, 1 Kings xvii. 4, 6, 14. In these times we do not expect miracles, in the strict sense of the word, but they who simply depend upon the Lord, will meet with such tokens of his interposition in a time of need, as will, to themselves at least, be a satisfying proof that he careth for them. How comfortable is it to us, as well as ornamental to our profession, to be able to trust the Lord in the path of duty; to believe that he will supply our wants, direct our steps, plead our cause, and controul our enemies! Thus he has promised, and it belongs to gospel-simplicity to take his word against all discouragements. This will animate us in the use of all lawful means, because the Lord has commanded us to wait upon him in them; but it will likewise inspire confidence and hope when all means seem to fail, Hab. iii, 17, 18. For want of this dependence, many dishonour their profession, and even make shipwreck of the faith. Their hearts are not simple; they do not trust in the Lord, but lean unto their own understandings, and their hopes or fears are influenced by worms like themselves. This causes a duplicity of conduct. They fear the Lord and serve other gods. By their language, at some times, one would suppose, they desire to serve the Lord only; but, as if they feared that he was not able to protect or provide for them, they make a league with the world, and seek either security or advantage from sinful compliances. These cannot rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience. They must live miserably. They are attempting to reconcile what our Lord has declared to be utterly incompatible, the service of God and mammon. They have so much sense of religion as embitters their worldly pursuits, and so much regard to the world as prevents their receiving any real comfort from religion. These are the lukewarm professors, neither hot nor cold; neither approved of men nor accepted of God. They can attend upon ordinances, and speak like christians; but their tempers are unsanctified, and their conduct irregular and blameable. They are not simple; and therefore they cannot be sincere.

I need not take time to prove, that the effect of simplicity will be sincerity. For they who love the Lord above all, who prefer the light of his countenance to thousands of gold and silver, who are enabled to trust him with all their concerns, and would rather be at his disposal than at their own, will have but little temptation to insincerity. The principles and motives upon which their conduct is formed, are the same in public as in private. Their behaviour will be all of a piece, because they have but one design. They will speak the truth in love, observe a strict punctuality in their dealings, and do unto others as they would others should do unto them; because these things are essential to their great aim of glorifying and enjoying their Lord. A fear of dishonouring his name, and of grieving his Spirit, will teach them not only to avoid gross and known sins, but to abstain from all appearance of evil. Their conduct will therefore be consistent; and they will be enabled

to appeal to all who know them, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world."

To a sincere christian, that craft and cunning which passes for wisdom in the world, appears to be not only unlawful but unnecessary. He has no need of the little reserves, evasions, and disguises, by which designing men endeavour (though often in vain) to conceal their proper characters, and to escape deserved contempt. He is what he seems to be, and therefore is not afraid of being found out. He walks by the light of the wisdom that is from above, and leans upon the arm of almighty power: therefore he walks at liberty, trusting in the Lord, whom he serves with his spirit in the gospel of his Son.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH many authors have written largely and well concerning communion with God, I shall not refer you to books, or have recourse to them myself; but in compliance with your request, shall simply offer you what occurs to my thoughts upon the subject. I propose not to exceed the limits of a sheet of paper, and must therefore come immediately to the point.

That God is to be worshipped, is generally acknowledged; but that they who worship him in spirit and in truth, have real fellowship and communion with him, is known only to themselves. The world can neither understand nor believe it. Many who would not be thought to have cast off all reverence for the scriptures, and therefore do not chuse flatly to contradict the apostle's testimony, 1 John i. 3. attempt to evade its force by restraining it to the primitive times. They will allow that it might be so then; but they pretend that circumstances with us, are greatly altered. Circumstances are, indeed, altered with us, so far, that men may now pass for christians who confess and manifest themselves strangers to the Spirit of Christ: but who can believe that the very nature and design of christianity should alter in the course of time? And that communion with God, which was essential to it in the apostles days, should now be so unnecessary and impracticable, as to expose all who profess an acquaintance with it, to the charge of enthusiasm and folly? However, they who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, will not be disputed out of their spiritual senses. If they are competent judges whether they ever saw the light, or felt the beams of the sun, they are no less certain that, by the knowledge of the gospel, they are brought into a state of communion with God.

Communion presupposes union. By nature we are strangers, yea, enemies to God; but we are reconciled, brought nigh, and become his children by faith in Christ Jesus. We can have no true knowledge of God, desire towards him, access unto him, or gracious communications from him, but in and through the Son of his love. He is the medium of this inestimable privilege; for he is the way, the only way of intercourse between heaven and earth; the sinner's way to God, and God's way of mercy to the sinner. If any pretend to know God, and to have communion with him, otherwise than by the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, and by faith in his name, it is a proof that they neither know God nor themselves. God, if considered abstracted from the revelation of himself in the person of Jesus, is a consuming fire; and if he should look upon us without respect to his covenant of mercy established in the Mediator, we could expect nothing from him but indignation and wrath. But when his Holy Spirit enables us to receive the record which he has given of his Son, we are delivered and secured from condemnation: we are accepted in the Beloved; we are united to him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead substantially dwells, and all the riches of divine wisdom, power, and love, are treasured up. Thus, in him, as the temple wherein the glory of God is manifested, and by him, as the representative and high priest of his people, and through him, as the living head of his mystical body the church, believers maintain communion with God. They have meat to eat which the world knows not of, honour which cometh of God only, joy which a stranger intermeddleth not with. They are, for the most part, poor and afflicted, frequently scorned and reproached, accounted hypocrites or visionaries, knaves or fools; but this one thing makes amends for all, "They have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

I would observe further, that as the incarnation of that mighty One, on whom our help is laid, was necessary, that a perfect obedience to the law, and a complete and proper atonement for sin, might be accomplished in the human nature that had sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God; so in another view it affords us unspeakable advantage for our comfortable and intimate communion with God by him. The adorable and awful perfections of Deity are softened, if I may so speak, and rendered more familiar and engaging to our apprehensions, when we consider them as resident in him, who is very bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and who, having by himself purged our sins, is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and reigns, in the nature of man, over all, God blessed for ever. Thus, he who knows our frame by

becoming man like ourselves, is the supreme and ultimate object of that philanthropy, that human affection which he originally implanted in us. He has made us susceptive of the endearments of friendship and relative life; and he admits us to communion with himself under the most engaging characters and relations, as our friend, our brother, and our husband.

They who, by that faith which is of the operation of God, are thus united to him in Christ, are brought thereby into a state of real habitual communion with him. The degree of its exercise and sensible perception on our parts, is various in different persons, and in the same person at different times; for it depends upon the communications we receive from the Lord the Spirit, who distributes to every man severally according to his will, adjusting his dispensations with a wise and merciful respect to our present state of discipline. If we were wholly freed from the effects of a depraved nature, the snares of an evil world; and the subtle temptations of Satan, our actual communion with God would be always lively, sensible, and fervent. It will be thus in heaven: there its exercise will be without obstruction, abatement, or interruption. But so long as we are liable to security, spiritual pride, indolence, an undue attachment to worldly things, and irregular distempered passions, the Lord is pleased to afford, increase, suspend, or renew the sensible impressions of his love and grace, in such seasons and measures as he sees most suitable to prevent or controul these evils, or to humble us for them. We grieve his Spirit, and he withdraws; but, by his secret power over our hearts, he makes us sensible of our folly and loss, teaches us to mourn after him, and to entreat his return. These desires, which are the effects of his own grace, he answers in his own time, and shines forth upon the soul with healing in his beams. But such is our weakness, and so unapt are we to retain even those lessons which we have learned, by painful experience, that we are prone to repeat our former miscarriages, and to render a repetition of the same changes necessary. From hence it is, that what we call our frames are so very variable, and our comfortable sense of divine communion is rather transient than abiding. But the communion itself, upon which the life and safety of our souls depend, is never ally obstructed; nor can it be, unless God uld be unmindful of his covenant, and for- e the work of his own hands. And when s not perceptible to sense, it may ordinari- be made evident to faith, by duly compar- what we read in the scriptures with what ses in our hearts. I say ordinarily, be- se there may be some excepted cases. If eliever is unhappily brought under the wer of some known sin, or has grievously notoriously declined from his profession, it is possible that the Lord may hide himself behind so dark a cloud, and leave him for a while to such hardness of heart, as that he shall seem to himself to be utterly destitute and forsaken. And the like apprehensions may be formed under some of Satan's violent temptations, when he is permitted to come in as a flood, and to overpower the apparent exercise of every grace by a torrent of blasphemous and evil imaginations. Yet the Lord is still present with his people in the darkest hours, or the unavoidable event of such cases would be apostasy or despair. Psalm xli. 11.

The communion we speak of comprises a mutual intercourse and communication in love, in counsels, and in interests.

In love.—The Lord, by his Spirit, manifests and confirms his love to his people. For this purpose he meets them at his throne of grace, and in his ordinances. There he makes himself known unto them, as he does not unto the world: causes his goodness to pass before them; opens, applies, and seals to them his exceeding great and precious promises; and gives them the Spirit of adoption, whereby, unworthy as they are, they are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father." He causes them to understand that great love wherewith he has loved them, in redeeming them by price and by power, washing them from their sins in the blood of the Lamb, recovering them from the dominion of Satan, and preparing for them an everlasting kingdom, where they shall see his face, and rejoice in his glory. The knowledge of this his love to them, produces a return of love from them to him. They adore him and admire him; they make an unreserved surrender of their hearts to him. They view him, and delight in him as their God, their Saviour, and their portion. They account his favour better than life. He is the sun of their souls: if he is pleased to shine upon them, all is well, and they are not greatly careful about other things; but if he hides his face, the smiles of the whole creation can afford them no solid comfort. They esteem one day or hour spent in the delightful contemplation of his glorious excellencies, and in the expression of their desires towards him, better than a thousand; and when their love is most fervent, they are ashamed that it is so faint, and chide and bemoan themselves, that they can love him no more. This often makes them long to depart, willing to leave their dearest earthly comforts, that they may see him as he is, without a vail or cloud; for they know that then, and not till then, they shall love him as they ought.

In counsels.—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He deals familiarly with them. He calls them not servants only, but friends; and he treats them as friends. He affords them more than promises; for he opens to them the plan of his great designs from everlasting to everlasting; shews them

of their assertion as they were capable of receiving, nor even explain, to their satisfaction, what they meant by sight; what may we imagine would be the consequence? I think there is little doubt but these innovators would experience much the same treatment as the believers of Jesus often meet with from a blind world. The blind people would certainly hate and despise them for presuming to pretend to what they had not. They would try to dispute them out of their senses, and bring many arguments to prove, that there could be no such thing as either light or sight. They would say, as many say now, How is it if these things are so, that we should know nothing of them? Yea, I think it probable, they would rise against them as deceivers and enthusiasts, and disturbers of the public peace, and say, "Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit that they should live." But if we should suppose further, that during the heat of the contest, some of these blind men should have their eyes suddenly opened, the dispute as to them would be at an end in a minute: they would confess their former ignorance and obstinacy, confirm the testimony of those whom they had before despised, and of course share in the same treatment from their blind brethren, perhaps be treated still worse, as apostates from the opinion of the public.

If this illustration is justly applicable to our subject, it may lead us to several observations, or inferences, which have a tendency to confirm what we are elsewhere expressly taught by the word of God.

In the first place, it shews, that regeneration, or that great change without which a man cannot see the kingdom of God, is the effect of almighty power. Neither education, endeavours, or arguments, can open the eyes of the blind. It is God alone, who at first caused light to shine out of darkness, who can shine into our hearts "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." People may attain some natural ideas of spiritual truths by reading books, or hearing sermons, and may thereby become wise in their own conceits: they may learn to imitate the language of an experienced christian; but they know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, and are as distant from the true meaning of the terms, as a blind man who pronounces the words blue or red, is from the ideas which those words raise in the mind of a person who can distinguish colours by his sight. And from hence we may infer the sovereignty as well as the efficacy of grace; since it is evident, not only that the objective light, the word of God, is not afforded universally to all men; but that those who enjoy the same outward means have not all the same perceptions. There are many who stumble in the noon-day, not for want of light but for want of eyes; and they who now see, were once blind even as others, and had neither power nor will to enlighten their own minds. It is a mercy, however, when people are so far sensible of their own blindness as to be willing to wait for the manifestation of the Lord's power, in the ordinances of his own appointment. He came into the world, and he sends forth his gospel, that those who see not may see; and when there is a desire raised in the heart for spiritual sight, it shall in his due time be answered.

From hence likewise we may observe the proper use and value of the preaching of the gospel, which is the great instrument by which the Holy Spirit opens the blind eyes. Like the rod of Moses, it owes all its efficacy to the appointment and promise of God. Ministers cannot be too earnest in the discharge of their office; it behoves them to use all diligence to find out acceptable words, and to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Yet when they have done all, they have done nothing, unless their word is accompanied to the heart by the power and demonstration of the Spirit. Without this blessing, an apostle might labour in vain: but it shall be in a measure afforded to all who preach the truth in love, in simplicity, and in an humble dependence upon him who alone can give success. This, in a great measure, puts all faithful ministers on a level, notwithstanding any seeming disparity in gifts and abilities. Those who have a lively and pathetic talent may engage the ear, and raise the natural passions of their hearers; but they cannot reach the heart. The blessing may be rather expected to attend the humble than the voluble speaker.

Further we may remark, that there is a difference in kind, between the highest attainments of nature, and the effects of grace in the lowest degree. Many are convinced, who are not truly enlightened; are afraid of the consequences of sin, though they never saw its evil; have a seeming desire of salvation, which is not founded upon a truly spiritual discovery of their own wretchedness, and the excellency of Jesus. These may, for a season, hear the word with joy, and walk in the way of professors; but we need not be surprised if they do not hold out, for they have not root. Though many shall fall, the foundation of God still standeth sure. We may confidently affirm, upon the warrant of scripture, that they who, having for a while escaped the pollutions of the world, are again habitually entangled in them, or who, having been distressed upon the account of sin, can find relief in a self-righteous course, and stop short of Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" we may affirm, that these, whatever profession they may have made, were never capable of receiving the beauty and glory of the gospel-salvation. On the other hand, though where the eyes are divinely enlightened, the soul's

first views of itself and of the gospel may be confused and indistinct, like him who saw men as it were trees walking; yet this light is like the dawn, which, though weak and faint at its first appearance, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is the work of God; and his work is perfect in kind, though progressive in the manner. He will not despise or forsake the day of small things. When he thus begins, he will make an end; and such persons, however feeble, poor, and worthless, in their own apprehensions, if they have obtained a glimpse of the Redeemer's glory, as he is made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that his name is precious, and the desire of their hearts is towards him, have good reason to hope and believe, as the wife of Manoah did in a similar case, that if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shewed them such things as these.

Once more, this spiritual sight and faculty is that which may be principally considered as inherent in a believer. He has no stock of grace, or comfort, or strength, in himself. He needs continual supplies; and if the Lord withdraws from him, he is as weak and unskilful, after he has been long engaged in the christian warfare, as he was when he first entered upon it. The eye is of little present use in the dark; for it cannot see without light. But the return of light is no advantage to a blind man. A believer may be much in the dark; but his spiritual sight remains. Though the exercise of grace may be low, he knows himself, he knows the Lord, he knows the way of access to a throne of grace. His frames and feelings may alter; but he has received such a knowledge of the person and offices, the power and grace, of Jesus the Saviour, as cannot be taken from him; and could withstand even an angel that should preach another gospel, because he has seen the Lord.—The paper constrains me to break off. May the Lord increase his light in your heart, and in the heart of, &c.

Jan 17-1784

LETTER XXII.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF A STATE OF POVERTY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

CONFESS myself almost ashamed to write to ou. You are pinched by poverty, suffer the ant of many things; and your faith is often arply tried, when you look at your family, nd, perhaps, can hardly conceive how you hall be able to supply them with bread to he end of the week. The Lord has appointd me a different lot. I am favoured, not ly with the necessaries, but with the comrts of life. Now, I could easily give you plenty of good advice; I could tell you, it is your duty to be patient, and even thankful, in the lowest state; that if you have bread and water, it is more than you deserve at the Lord's hands; and that, as you are out of hell, and made a partaker of the hope of the gospel, you ought not to think any thing hard that you meet with in the way to heaven. If I should say thus, and say no more, you would not dispute the truth of my assertions; but, as coming from me, who live at ease, to you, who are beset with difficulties, you might question their propriety, and think that I know but little of my own heart, and could feel but little for your distress. You would probably compare me to one who should think himself a mariner, because he had studied the art of navigation by the fireside, though he had never seen the sea. Yet I hope, by my frequent converse with the Lord's poor (for I live in the midst of an afflicted and poor people), I have made some observations, which, though not strictly the fruit of my own experience, may not be wholly unseasonable or unacceptable to you.

Whether the rich or the poor, who live without God in the world, are most to be pitied, is not easy to determine. It is a dreadful case to be miserable in both worlds; but yet the parade and seeming prosperity in which some live for a few years, will be no abatement, but rather a great aggravation, of their future torment. A madman is equally to be pitied, whether he is laid upon a bed of state or a bed of straw. Madness is in the heart of every unregenerate sinner; and the more he possesses of this world's goods, he is so much the more extensively mischievous. Poverty is so far a negative good to those who have no other restraint, that it confines the effects of the evil heart within narrower bounds, and the small circle of their immediate connections; whereas the rich, who live under the power of sin, are unfaithful stewards of a larger trust, and, by their pernicious influence, are often instrumental in diffusing profaneness and licentiousness through a country or a kingdom, besides the innumerable acts of oppression, and the ravages of war, which are perpetrated to gratify the insatiable demands of luxury, ambition, and pride. But to leave this, if we turn our eyes from the false maxims of the world, and weigh things in the balance of the sanctuary, I believe we shall find that the believing poor, though they have many trials which call for our compassion, have some advantages above those of the Lord's people to whom he has given a larger share of the good things of the present life. Why else does the apostle say, "God hath chosen the poor?" or why do we see, in fact, that so few of the rich, or wise, or mighty, are called? Certainly he does not chuse them because they are poor; for "he is no respecter of persons:" rather, I think, we may say, that know-

ing what is in their hearts, the nature of the world through which they are to pass, and what circumstances are best suited to manifest the truth and efficacy of his grace, he has, in the general, chosen poverty as the best state for them. Some exceptions he has made, that his people may not be wholly without support and countenance, and that the sufficiency of his grace may be made known in every state of life; but, for the most part, they are a poor and afflicted people; and in this appointment he has had a regard to their honour, their safety, and their comfort. I have room for but a very brief illustration of these particulars.

Sanctified poverty is an honourable state; not so, indeed, in the judgment of the world. The rich have many friends; the poor are usually despised. But I am speaking of that honour which cometh from God only. The poor, who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," are honoured with the nearest external conformity to Jesus, their Saviour, who, though he was Lord of all, was pleased, for our sakes, to make himself so poor, that he had not where to lay his head, and submitted to receive assistance from the contributions of his followers, Luke viii. 3. By this astonishing humiliation, he poured contempt upon all human glory, and made the state of poverty honourable; and now, "he that reproacheth the poor despiseth his Maker." And as he was, so were his apostles in this world. They were not only destitute of rank, titles, and estates, but were often in hunger and nakedness, and had no certain dwelling-place. To infer from hence, as some have done, that riches, and the accommodations of life, are unsuitable to the state of a christian, is the mark of a superstitious and legal spirit. There were, in those days, several believers that were in a state of affluence, as, for instance, Theophilus, whom Luke addresses by a title of honour, κρατιστε (most noble, or excellent), the same which St. Paul ascribes to the Roman governor. But we may safely infer, that that state of life in which our Lord was pleased to converse with men, and which was the lot of his apostles, and most favoured servants, is honourable in the sight of God.

Again, poverty is honourable, because it affords a peculiar advantage for glorifying God, and evidencing the power of his grace, and the faithfulness of his promises, in the sight of men. A believer, if rich, lives by faith, and his faith meets with various trials. He himself knows by whom he stands; but it is not ordinarily so visible to others, as in the case of the poor. When ministers speak of the all-sufficiency of God to those who trust in him, and the certain effect of the principles of the gospel, in supporting, satisfying, and regulating the mind of man, the poor are the best and most unsuspected witnesses for the truth of their doctrine. If we are asked, Where do these wonderful people live, who can delight themselves in God, esteem a day in his courts better than a thousand, and prefer the light of his countenance to all earthly joy? we can confidently send them to the poor of the flock. Amongst the number who are so called, there are some who will not disappoint our appeal. Let the world, who refuse to believe the preachers, believe their own eyes; and when they see a poor person content, thankful, rejoicing, admiring the Lord's goodness for affording him what they account hard fare, and, in the midst of various pressures, incapable of being bribed by offers, or terrified by threats, to swerve a step from the path of known duty, let them acknowledge that this is the finger of God. If they harden themselves against this evidence, "neither would they be persuaded, though one should arise from the dead."

And as poverty is an honourable, so it is comparatively a safe state. True, it is attended with its peculiar temptations; but it is not near so suitable to draw forth and nourish the two grand corruptions of the heart, self-importance, and an idolatrous cleaving to the world, as the opposite state of riches. They who are rich in this world, and who know the Lord and their own hearts, feel the wisdom and propriety of the apostle's charge, "Not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches." If poor believers consider the snares to which their rich brethren are exposed, they will rather pray for and pity, than envy them. Their path is slippery; they have reason to cry continually, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe;" for they live in the midst of the hurries and vanities of the world, are engaged in a large sphere of action, and are incessantly exposed to interruptions and snares. The carriage of all around them reminds them of their supposed consequence; and, by the nature of their situation, they are greatly precluded from plain dealing and friendly advice. But the poor are not surrounded with flatterers, nor teazed with impertinencies. They meet with little to stimulate their pride, or to soothe their vanity. They not only believe in their judgments, but are constrained to feel, by the experience of every day, that this world cannot afford them rest. If they have food and raiment, and grace therewith to be content, they have reason to be thankful for an exemption from those splendid cares and delusive appearances, which are the inseparable attendants of wealth and worldly distinction, and which, if not more burdensome, are, humanly speaking, much more dangerous, and greater impediments to the progress of a spiritual life, than the ordinary trials of the poor.

The believing poor have likewise, for the most part, the advantage in point of spiritual comfort, and that principally in two respects.

First, As they are called to a life of more immediate dependence upon the promise and providence of God (having little else to trust to), they have a more direct and frequent experience of his interposition in their favour. Obadiah was a servant of God, though he lived in the court of Ahab. He, doubtless, had his difficulties in such a situation; but he was not in want. He had not only enough for himself in a time of dearth, but was able to impart to others. We may believe that he well knew he was indebted to the Lord's goodness for his provision; but he could hardly have so sweet, so strong, so sensible an impression of God's watchful care over him as Elijah had, who, when he was deprived of all human support, was statedly fed by the ravens. Such of the Lord's people who have estates in land, or thousands in the bank, will acknowledge, that even the bread they eat is the gift of the Lord's bounty; yet, having a moral certainty of a provision for life, I should apprehend that they cannot exercise faith in the divine providence, with respect to their temporal supplies, so distinctly as the poor, who, having no friend or resource upon earth, are necessitated to look immediately to their Father, who is in heaven, for their daily bread. And though it is not given to the world to know what an intercourse is carried on between heaven and earth, nor with what acceptance the prayers of the poor and afflicted enter into the ears of the Lord of hosts; yet many of them have had such proofs of his attention, wisdom, faithfulness, power, and love, in supplying their wants, and opening them a way of relief, when they have been beset with difficulties on all sides, as have been, to themselves at least, no less certain and indisputable, I had almost said, no less glorious, than the miracles which he wrought for Israel, when he divided the Red Sea before them, and gave them food from the clouds. Such evidences of the power of faith, the efficacy of prayer, and the truth of the scriptures (preferable to mountains of gold and silver, and for which the state of poverty furnishes the most frequent occasions), are a rich overbalance for all its inconveniencies. But,

Secondly, I apprehend that the humble and believing poor have, in general, the greatest share of those consolations, which are the effect of the light of God's countenance lifted up upon the soul, of his love shed abroad in the heart, or of a season of refreshment from his presence. By such expressions as these, the scriptures intimate that "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" a description of which, those who have tasted it will not require, and those who are strangers to it, could not understand. This joy is not always the companion of faith, not even of strong faith; but it is that which a believer, whether rich or poor, incessantly thirsts after; and, in comparison whereof, all worldly good is but vanity and disappointment. The Lord imparts this joy to his people, in season and measure, as he sees fit; but his poor people have the largest share. They have little comfort from the world, therefore, he is pleased to be their comforter. They have many trials and sufferings; and he with whom they have to do, knows their situation and pressures: he has promised to make their strength equal to their day, and to revive their fainting spirits with heavenly cordials. When it is thus with them, they can say with Jacob, "I have enough;" or, as it is in the orginal, "I have all." This makes hard things easy, and the burden light, which the flesh would otherwise complain of as heavy. This has often given a sweeter relish to bread and water, than the sensualist ever found to be in the most studied and expensive refinements of luxury. Blessed are the poor, who are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him. They often enjoy the most lively foretastes of the glory which shall be revealed.

Have not you, my friend, found these things true in your own experience? Yes; the Lord has sanctified your crosses, and supported you under them. Hitherto he has helped you, and he will be with you to the end. As you have followed him upon earth, you will ere long follow him to heaven. You are now called to sow in tears; there you shall reap in joy, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes. In the mean time, be thankful that he honours you, in appointing you to be a witness for the truth and power of his grace, in the midst of an unbelieving world.

It is true, that even where the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. You have sharp trials, which, for the present, cannot be joyous, but grievous; and you have doubtless felt the depravity of your nature, and the subtilty of Satan, at some times prompting you to impatience, envy, and distrust. But these evils are not peculiar to a state of poverty; you would have been exposed to the same had you lived in affluence, together with many others, from which you are now exempted; for riches and poverty are but comparative terms, and it is only the grace of God that can teach us to be content in any possible situation of life. The rich are as prone to desire something which they have not as the poor; and they who have most to lose have most to fear. That a man's life (the happiness of his life) "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," is an aphorism founded upon the highest authority, and confirmed by universal experience and observation.

In a word, you are not poor, but rich. The promises are your inheritance; heaven is your home; the angels of the Lord are ministering spirits, who rejoice to watch over you for good; and the Lord of angels himself is your

sun, and shield, and everlasting portion. It is impossible that you, to whom he has given Himself, his Son, his Spirit, his grace, his kingdom, can want any thing that is truly good for you. If riches were so, he could pour them upon you in abundance, as easily as he provides you your daily bread. But these, for the most part, he bestows on those who have no portion but in the present life. You have great reason to rejoice in the lot he has appointed for you, which secures you from numberless imaginary wants and real dangers, and furnishes you with the fairest opportunities for the manifestation, exercise, and increase of the graces he has implanted in you.—Influenced by these views, I trust you can cheerfully say,

> What others value I resign:
> Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine.

I commend you to the blessing of our covenant God, and to Jesus our Saviour, who, when he was rich, made himself poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be rich.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

ON SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY.

DEAR SIR,

It would be a happy time if all professors of the gospel could, with the apostle, rejoice in the testimony of their consciences, that they walked in simplicity and godly sincerity. How many evils and scandals would be then prevented! But, alas! too many who name the name of Christ, seem to have hardly any idea of this essential part of the christian character. A few thoughts upon a subject so little attended to, may not be unseasonable. The most advanced in the christian life have something of this lesson yet to learn; and the greater proficiency we make in it, the greater will be our inward peace, and the more will our light shine before men, to the glory of our heavenly Father.

Simplicity and sincerity, though inseparable, may be distinguished. The former is the principle from which the latter is derived. Simplicity primarily respects the frame of our spirit in the sight of God; sincerity more directly regards our conduct as it falls under the observation of men. It is true, the terms are frequently used indifferently for each other, and may be so without occasioning any considerable mistake; but as they are not precisely the same, it may be proper, if we would speak accurately, to keep this distinction in view.

Some persons, who have been more enamoured with the name of simplicity, than acquainted with its nature, have substituted in its stead a childishness of language and manners, as if they understood the word simple only in the mere vulgar sense, as equivalent to foolish. But this infantine softness gives just disgust to those who have a true taste and judgment of divine things; not only as it is an unnecessary deviation from the common usages of mankind, but because, being the effect of art and imitation, it palpably defeats its own pretences. An artificial, or affected simplicity, is a contradiction in terms, and differs as much from the simplicity of the gospel, as paint does from beauty.

The true simplicity, which is the honour and strength of a believer, is the effect of a spiritual perception of the truths of the gospel. It arises from, and bears a proportion to, the sense we have of our own unworthiness, the power and grace of Christ, and the greatness of our obligations to him. So far as our knowledge of these things is vital and experimental, it will make us simple-hearted. This simplicity may be considered in two respects,—a simplicity of intention, and a simplicity of dependence. The former stands in opposition to the corrupt workings of self, the latter to the false reasonings of unbelief.

Simplicity of intention implies, that we have but one leading aim, to which it is our deliberate and unreserved desire, that every thing else in which we are concerned may be subordinate and subservient; in a word, that we are devoted to the Lord, and have, by grace, been enabled to chuse him, and to yield ourselves to him, so as to place our happiness in his favour, and to make his glory and will the ultimate scope of all our actions. He well deserves this from us. He is the all-sufficient good. He alone is able to satisfy the vast capacity he has given us; for he formed us for himself: and they who have tasted that he is gracious, know that his "loving-kindness is better than life;" and that his presence and fulness can supply the want, or make up the loss of all creature-comforts. So likewise, he has a just claim to us that we should be wholly his; for besides that, as his creatures, we are in his hand as clay in the hands of the potter, he has a redemption title to us. He loved us, and bought us with his own blood. He did not hesitate or halt between two opinions, when he engaged to redeem our souls from the curse of the law, and the power of Satan. He could, in the hour of his distress, have summoned legions of angels, had that been needful, to his assistance, or have destroyed his enemies with a word or a look; he could easily have saved himself; but how then could his people have been saved, or the promises of the scriptures have been fulfilled? Therefore he willingly endured the cross, he gave his back to the smiters, he poured out his blood, he laid down his life. Here was an adorable simplicity of intention in him; and

shall we not, O thou lover of souls, be simply, heartily, and wholly thine? Shall we refuse the cup of affliction from thy hand, or for thy sake? Or shall we desire to drink of the cup of sinful pleasure, when we remember what our sins have cost thee? Shall we wish to be loved by the world that hated thee, or to be admired by the world that despised thee? Shall we be ashamed of professing our attachment to such a Saviour? Nay, Lord forbid it. Let thy love constrain us, let thy name be glorified, and thy will be done by us and in us. Let us count all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us not desire any thing thou seest fit to withhold, nor repine to part with what thou callest for; nor even take pleasure in what thou bestowest, unless we can improve it for thee, and ever prefer thy love above our chief temporal joy! Such is the language of the heart that is blessed with gospel-simplicity. It was once the stronghold of sin, the throne of self: but now self is cast down, and Jesus rules by the golden sceptre of love. This principle preserves the soul from low, sordid, and idolatrous pursuits, will admit of no rival near the Beloved, nor will it yield either to the bribes or threats of the world.

There is likewise a simplicity of dependence. Unbelief is continually starting objections, magnifying and multiplying difficulties. But faith in the power and promises of God, inspires a noble simplicity, and casts every care upon him, who is able, and has engaged to support and provide. Thus, when Abraham, at the Lord's call, forsook his country and his father's house, the apostle observes, "He went out, not knowing whether he went." It was enough that he knew whom he followed. The all-sufficient God was his guide, his shield, and his exceeding great reward. So, when exercised with long waiting for the accomplishment of the promise, he staggered not, [illegible], he did not dispute or question, but simply depended upon God, who had spoken and was able also to perform. So likewise, when he received that hard command, to offer up his son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," he simply obeyed, and depended upon the Lord to make good his own word, Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. In this spirit David went forth to meet Goliah, and overcame him; and thus the three worthies were [illegible]wed by the threats of Nebuchadnezzar, [illegible] rather chose to be cast into a burning fur[illegible]ce, than to sin against the Lord. And thus [illegible]ijah, in a time of famine, was preserved [illegible]n anxiety and want, and supported by ex[illegible]rdinary methods, 1 Kings xvii. 4, 6, 14. [illegible]hese times we do not expect miracles, in the [illegible]ict sense of the word, but they who simply [illegible]end upon the Lord, will meet with such [illegible]ens of his interposition in a time of need, [illegible]rill, to themselves at least, be a satisfying proof that he careth for them. How comfortable is it to us, as well as ornamental to our profession, to be able to trust the Lord in the path of duty; to believe that he will supply our wants, direct our steps, plead our cause, and controul our enemies! Thus he has promised, and it belongs to gospel-simplicity to take his word against all discouragements. This will animate us in the use of all lawful means, because the Lord has commanded us to wait upon him in them; but it will likewise inspire confidence and hope when all means seem to fail, Hab. iii, 17, 18. For want of this dependence, many dishonour their profession, and even make shipwreck of the faith. Their hearts are not simple; they do not trust in the Lord, but lean unto their own understandings, and their hopes or fears are influenced by worms like themselves. This causes a duplicity of conduct. They fear the Lord and serve other gods. By their language, at some times, one would suppose, they desire to serve the Lord only; but, as if they feared that he was not able to protect or provide for them, they make a league with the world, and seek either security or advantage from sinful compliances. These cannot rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience. They must live miserably. They are attempting to reconcile what our Lord has declared to be utterly incompatible, the service of God and mammon. They have so much sense of religion as embitters their worldly pursuits, and so much regard to the world as prevents their receiving any real comfort from religion. These are the lukewarm professors, neither hot nor cold; neither approved of men nor accepted of God. They can attend upon ordinances, and speak like christians; but their tempers are unsanctified, and their conduct irregular and blameable. They are not simple; and therefore they cannot be sincere.

I need not take time to prove, that the effect of simplicity will be sincerity. For they who love the Lord above all, who prefer the light of his countenance to thousands of gold and silver, who are enabled to trust him with all their concerns, and would rather be at his disposal than at their own, will have but little temptation to insincerity. The principles and motives upon which their conduct is formed, are the same in public as in private. Their behaviour will be all of a piece, because they have but one design. They will speak the truth in love, observe a strict punctuality in their dealings, and do unto others as they would others should do unto them; because these things are essential to their great aim of glorifying and enjoying their Lord. A fear of dishonouring his name, and of grieving his Spirit, will teach them not only to avoid gross and known sins, but to abstain from all appearance of evil. Their conduct will therefore be consistent; and they will be enabled

to appeal to all who know them, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world."

To a sincere christian, that craft and cunning which passes for wisdom in the world, appears to be not only unlawful but unnecessary. He has no need of the little reserves, evasions, and disguises, by which designing men endeavour (though often in vain) to conceal their proper characters, and to escape deserved contempt. He is what he seems to be, and therefore is not afraid of being found out. He walks by the light of the wisdom that is from above, and leans upon the arm of almighty power: therefore he walks at liberty, trusting in the Lord, whom he serves with his spirit in the gospel of his Son.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH many authors have written largely and well concerning communion with God, I shall not refer you to books, or have recourse to them myself; but in compliance with your request, shall simply offer you what occurs to my thoughts upon the subject. I propose not to exceed the limits of a sheet of paper, and must therefore come immediately to the point.

That God is to be worshipped, is generally acknowledged; but that they who worship him in spirit and in truth, have real fellowship and communion with him, is known only to themselves. The world can neither understand nor believe it. Many who would not be thought to have cast off all reverence for the scriptures, and therefore do not chuse flatly to contradict the apostle's testimony, 1 John i. 3. attempt to evade its force by restraining it to the primitive times. They will allow that it might be so then; but they pretend that circumstances with us, are greatly altered. Circumstances are, indeed, altered with us, so far, that men may now pass for christians who confess and manifest themselves strangers to the Spirit of Christ: but who can believe that the very nature and design of christianity should alter in the course of time? And that communion with God, which was essential to it in the apostles days, should now be so unnecessary and impracticable, as to expose all who profess an acquaintance with it, to the charge of enthusiasm and folly? However, they who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, will not be disputed out of their spiritual senses. If they are competent judges whether they ever saw the light, or felt the beams of the sun, they are no less certain that, by the knowledge of the gospel, they are brought into a state of communion with God.

Communion presupposes union. By nature we are strangers, yea, enemies to God; but we are reconciled, brought nigh, and become his children by faith in Christ Jesus. We can have no true knowledge of God, desire towards him, access unto him, or gracious communications from him, but in and through the Son of his love. He is the medium of this inestimable privilege; for he is the way, the only way of intercourse between heaven and earth; the sinner's way to God, and God's way of mercy to the sinner. If any pretend to know God, and to have communion with him, otherwise than by the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, and by faith in his name, it is a proof that they neither know God nor themselves. God, if considered abstracted from the revelation of himself in the person of Jesus, is a consuming fire; and if he should look upon us without respect to his covenant of mercy established in the Mediator, we could expect nothing from him but indignation and wrath. But when his Holy Spirit enables us to receive the record which he has given of his Son, we are delivered and secured from condemnation: we are accepted in the Beloved; we are united to him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead substantially dwells, and all the riches of divine wisdom, power, and love, are treasured up. Thus, in him, as the temple wherein the glory of God is manifested, and by him, as the representative and high priest of his people, and through him, as the living head of his mystical body the church, believers maintain communion with God. They have meat to eat which the world knows not of, honour which cometh of God only, joy which a stranger intermeddleth not with. They are, for the most part, poor and afflicted, frequently scorned and reproached, accounted hypocrites or visionaries, knaves or fools; but this one thing makes amends for all, "They have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

I would observe further, that as the incarnation of that mighty One, on whom our help is laid, was necessary, that a perfect obedience to the law, and a complete and proper atonement for sin, might be accomplished in the human nature that had sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God; so in another view it affords us unspeakable advantage for our comfortable and intimate communion with God by him. The adorable and awful perfections of Deity are softened, if I may so speak, and rendered more familiar and engaging to our apprehensions, when we consider them as resident in him, who is very bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and who, having by himself purged our sins, is now seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and reigns, in the nature of man, over all, God blessed for ever. Thus, he who knows our frame by

becoming man like ourselves, is the supreme and ultimate object of that philanthropy, that human affection which he originally implanted in us. He has made us susceptive of the endearments of friendship and relative life; and he admits us to communion with himself under the most engaging characters and relations, as our friend, our brother, and our husband.

They who, by that faith which is of the operation of God, are thus united to him in Christ, are brought thereby into a state of real habitual communion with him. The degree of its exercise and sensible perception on our parts, is various in different persons, and in the same person at different times; for it depends upon the communications we receive from the Lord the Spirit, who distributes to every man severally according to his will, adjusting his dispensations with a wise and merciful respect to our present state of discipline. If we were wholly freed from the effects of a depraved nature, the snares of an evil world; and the subtle temptations of Satan, our actual communion with God would be always lively, sensible, and fervent. It will be thus in heaven: there its exercise will be without obstruction, abatement, or interruption. But so long as we are liable to security, spiritual pride, indolence, an undue attachment to worldly things, and irregular distempered passions, the Lord is pleased to afford, increase, suspend, or renew the sensible impressions of his love and grace, in such seasons and measures as he sees most suitable to prevent or controul these evils, or to humble us for them. We grieve his Spirit, and he withdraws; but, by his secret power over our hearts, he makes us sensible of our folly and loss, teaches us to mourn after him, and to entreat his return. These desires, which are the effects of his own grace, he answers in his own time, and shines forth upon the soul with healing in his beams. But such is our weakness, and so unapt are we to retain even those lessons which we have learned, by painful experience, that we are prone to repeat our former miscarriages, and to render a repetition of the same changes necessary. From hence it is, that what we call our frames are so very variable, and our comfortable sense of divine communion is rather transient than abiding. But the communion itself, upon which the life and safety of our souls depend, is never ---ally obstructed; nor can it be, unless God uld be unmindful of his covenant, and for- e the work of his own hands. And when s not perceptible to sense, it may ordinari- be made evident to faith, by duly compar- what we read in the scriptures with what ses in our hearts. I say ordinarily, be- se there may be some excepted cases. If -liever is unhappily brought under the er of some known sin, or has grievously notoriously declined from his profession, it is possible that the Lord may hide himself behind so dark a cloud, and leave him for a while to such hardness of heart, as that he shall seem to himself to be utterly destitute and forsaken. And the like apprehensions may be formed under some of Satan's violent temptations, when he is permitted to come in as a flood, and to overpower the apparent exercise of every grace by a torrent of blasphemous and evil imaginations. Yet the Lord is still present with his people in the darkest hours, or the unavoidable event of such cases would be apostasy or despair. Psalm xli. 11.

The communion we speak of comprises a mutual intercourse and communication in love, in counsels, and in interests.

In love.—The Lord, by his Spirit, manifests and confirms his love to his people. For this purpose he meets them at his throne of grace, and in his ordinances. There he makes himself known unto them, as he does not unto the world: causes his goodness to pass before them; opens, applies, and seals to them his exceeding great and precious promises; and gives them the Spirit of adoption, whereby, unworthy as they are, they are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father." He causes them to understand that great love wherewith he has loved them, in redeeming them by price and by power, washing them from their sins in the blood of the Lamb, recovering them from the dominion of Satan, and preparing for them an everlasting kingdom, where they shall see his face, and rejoice in his glory. The knowledge of this his love to them, produces a return of love from them to him. They adore him and admire him; they make an unreserved surrender of their hearts to him. They view him, and delight in him as their God, their Saviour, and their portion. They account his favour better than life. He is the sun of their souls: if he is pleased to shine upon them, all is well, and they are not greatly careful about other things; but if he hides his face, the smiles of the whole creation can afford them no solid comfort. They esteem one day or hour spent in the delightful contemplation of his glorious excellencies, and in the expression of their desires towards him, better than a thousand; and when their love is most fervent, they are ashamed that it is so faint, and chide and bemoan themselves, that they can love him no more. This often makes them long to depart, willing to leave their dearest earthly comforts, that they may see him as he is, without a vail or cloud; for they know that then, and not till then, they shall love him as they ought.

In counsels.—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He deals familiarly with them. He calls them not servants only, but friends; and he treats them as friends. He affords them more than promises; for he opens to them the plan of his great designs from everlasting to everlasting; shews them

the strong foundations and inviolable securities of his favour towards them, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of his love, which passeth knowledge, and the unsearchable riches of his grace. He instructs them in the mysterious conduct of his providence, the reasons and ends of all his dispensations in which they are concerned; and solves a thousand hard questions to their satisfaction, which are inexplicable to the natural wisdom of man. He teaches them likewise the beauty of his precepts, the path of their duty, and the nature of their warfare. He acquaints them with the plots of their enemies, the snares and dangers they are exposed to, and the best methods of avoiding them. And he permits and enables them to acquaint him with all their cares, fears, wants, and troubles, with more freedom than they can unbosom themselves to their nearest earthly friends. His ear is always open to them; he is never weary of hearing their complaints, and answering their petitions. The men of the world would account it a high honour and privilege to have an unrestrained liberty of access to an earthly king; but what words can express the privilege and honour of believers, who, whenever they please, have audience of the King of kings, whose compassion, mercy, and power, are like his majesty, infinite. The world wonders at their indifference to the vain pursuits and amusements by which others are engrossed; that they are so patient in trouble, so inflexible in their conduct, so well satisfied with that state of poverty and obscurity which the Lord, for the most part, allots them; but the wonder would cease if what passes in secret were publicly known. They have obtained the pearl of great price; they have communion with God: they derive their wisdom, strength, and comfort, from on high, and cast all their cares upon him who, they assuredly know, vouchsafes to take care of them. This reminds me of another branch of their communion, namely,

In interests.—The Lord claims them for his portion; he accounts them his jewels; and their happiness in time and eternity is the great end which, next to his own glory, and in inseparable connection with it, he has immediately and invariably in view. In this point all his dispensations of grace and providence shall finally terminate. He himself is their guide and their guard: he keeps them as the apple of his eye; the hairs of their heads are numbered; and not an event in their lives takes place but in an appointed subserviency to their final good. And as he is pleased to espouse their interest, they, through grace, are devoted to his. They are no longer their own; they would not be their own; it is their desire, their joy, their glory, to live to him who died for them. He has won their hearts by his love, and made them a willing people in the day of his power. The glory of his name, the success of his cause, the prosperity of his people, the accomplishment of his will, these are the great and leading objects which are engraven upon their hearts, and to which all their prayers, desires, and endeavours, are directed. They would count nothing dear, not even their lives, if set in competition with these. In the midst of their afflictions, if the Lord is glorified, if sinners are converted, if the church flourishes, they can rejoice. But when iniquity abounds, when love waxes cold, when professors depart from the doctrines of truth and the power of godliness, then they are grieved and pained to the heart; then they are touched in what they account their nearest interest, because it is their Lord's.

This is the spirit of a true christian. May the Lord increase it in us, and in all who love his name. I have room only to subscribe myself, &c.

LETTER XXV.

ON FAITH, AND THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

DEAR SIR,

In compliance with your request, I freely give you my sentiments on the particulars you desired. Your candour will pass over all inadvertencies, when I give you such thoughts as offer themselves spontaneously, and without study. If the Lord is pleased to bring any thing valuable to my mind, I shall be glad to send it to you; and I am willing to believe, that when christians, in his name and fear, are writing to one another, he does often imperceptibly guide us to drop "a word in season," which, I hope, will be the case at present.

The first object of solicitude to an awakened soul, is safety. The law speaks, the sinner hears and fears. A holy God is revealed, the sinner sees and trembles. Every false hope is swept away; and an earnest inquiry takes place, "What shall I do to be saved?" In proportion as faith is given, Jesus is discovered as the only Saviour, and the question is answered; and as faith increases, fear subsides, and a comfortable hope of life and immortality succeeds.

When we have thus "a good hope through grace," that heaven shall be our home, I think the next inquiry is, or should be, How we may possess as much of heaven by the way as is possible? in other words, How a life of communion with our Lord and Saviour may be maintained in the greatest power, and with the least interruption that is consistent with the present imperfect state of things? I am persuaded, dear Sir, this is the point that lies nearest your heart; and, therefore, I shall speak freely my mind upon it.

In the first place, it is plain from scripture

and experience, that all our abatements, declensions, and languors, arise from a defect of faith; from the imperfect manner in which we take up the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the scriptures. If our apprehensions of him were nearly suitable to the characters which he bears in his own word; if we had a strong and abiding sense of his power and grace always upon our hearts, doubts and complaints would cease. This would make hard things easy, and bitter things sweet, and dispose our hearts with cheerfulness to do and suffer the whole will of God; and living upon and to him, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, joy, and supreme end, we should live a heaven upon earth. The face of the question is, therefore, a little changed, and amounts to this, What are the means to increase and strengthen our faith?

I apprehend that the growth of faith, no less than of all other graces, of which faith is the root, is gradual, and ordinarily effected in the use of appointed means; yet not altogether arbitrary, but appointed by him who knows our frame, and therefore works in us, in a way suited to those capacities he has endued us with.

1. If faith arises from the knowledge of Christ, and this knowledge is only contained in the word of God, it follows, that a careful and frequent perusal of the scriptures, which testify of him, is a fit and a necessary means of improving our faith.

2. If, besides the outward revelation of the word, there must be a revelation of the Spirit of God likewise, whose office it is to take of the things of Jesus, and shew them to the soul, by and according to the written word, John xvi. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 18; and if this Spirit is promised and limited to those who ask it; then it follows likewise, that secret prayer is another necessary means of strengthening faith. Indeed, these two I account the prime ordinances. If we were providentially, and not wilfully restrained from all the rest, the word of grace, and the throne of grace, would supply their wants. With these we might be happy in a dungeon or in a desert; but nothing will compensate the neglect of these. Though we should be engaged in a course of the best conversation, and attend upon sermons from one end of the week to the other, we would languish and starve in the midst of plenty; our souls would grow dry and lean, unless these secret exercises are kept up with some degree of exactness.

3. Another means to this purpose, is faithfulness to light already received, John vii. 15—24, especially ver. 21. It is worth observation, that faith and fidelity, the act of dependence, and the purpose of obedience, are expressed in the Greek by the same word. Though the power is all of God, and the blessing of mere free grace; yet, if there be any secret reserve, any allowed evil contrived at in the heart and life, this will shut up the avenues to comfort, and check the growth of faith. I lay very little stress upon that faith or comfort which is not affected by unsteady walking.

The experience of past years has taught me to distinguish between ignorance and disobedience. The Lord is gracious to the weakness of his people: many involuntary mistakes will not interrupt their communion with him; he pities their infirmity, and teaches them to do better. But if they dispute his known will, and act against the dictates of conscience, they will surely suffer for it. This will weaken their hands, and bring distress into their hearts. Wilful sin sadly perplexes and retards our progress. May the Lord keep us from it! It raises a dark cloud, and hides the Sun of righteousness from our view; and till he is pleased freely to shine forth again, we can do nothing; and for this, perhaps, he will make us wait, and cry out often, "How long, O Lord! how long?"

Thus, by reading the word of God, by frequent prayer, by a simple attention to the Lord's will, together with the use of public ordinances, and the observations we are able to make upon what passes within us and without us, which is what we call experience, the Lord watering and blessing with the influence of his Holy Spirit, may we grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, be more humbled in our own eyes, more weaned from self, more fixed on him as our all in all, till at last we shall meet before his throne.

The communion of saints, another point you desire my thoughts upon, is the great privilege of all the children of God: they may be separate from each other in body, and yet may daily meet at the throne of grace. This is one branch of the communion of saints, to be present in spirit to each other; sharing in common of the influences of the same Spirit, they feel the same desires, aim at the same objects, and, so far as they are personally acquainted, are led to bear each other upon their hearts in prayer. It has often been an encouragement to me in a dark and dull hour, when rather the constraint of duty, than the consideration of privilege, has brought me upon my knees, to reflect how many hearts, and eyes, and hands, have been probably lifted up in the same moment with mine. This thought has given me new courage. O what a great family has our Father! and what David says of the natural, is true of the spiritual life, Psalm civ. "These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thine hand, and they are filled with good." Then I particularly think of those who have been helpful to me in time past; the seasons of sweet communion we have enjoyed together, the subjects of our

mutual complaints, &c. Where are they, or how engaged, now? Perhaps this moment praying, or thinking about me. Then I am roused to make their cases my own, and by attempting to plead for them, I get strength to pray for myself. It is an encouragement, no doubt, in a field of battle, to know that the army we belong to is large, unanimous, all in action, pressing on from every side against the common enemy, and gaining ground in every attack. But if we derive fresh spirits from considering our friends and associates on earth, how should we take fire, if we could penetrate within the vail, and take a view of the invisible world! We should not then complain that we were serving God alone. O the numbers, the voices, the raptures, of that heavenly host! Not one complaining note, not one discordant string. How many thousand years has the harmony been strengthening, by the hourly accession of new voices!

I sometimes compare this earth to a temporary gallery or stage, erected for all the heirs of glory to pass over, that they may join in the coronation of the Great King! a solemnity in which they shall not be mere spectators, but deeply interested parties; for he is their husband, their Lord; they bear his name, and shall share in all his honours. Righteous Abel led the van; the procession has been sometimes broader, sometimes narrowed to almost a single person, as in the days of Noah. After many generations had successively entered and disappeared, the King himself passed on in person, preceded by one chosen harbinger. He received many insults on his passage; but he bore all for the sake of those he loved, and entered triumphant into his glory.

He was followed by twelve faithful servants, and after them the procession became wider than ever. There are many yet unborn who must, as we do now, tread in the steps of those gone before; and when the whole company is arrived, the stage shall be taken down and burnt.

> Then all the faithful, chosen race
> Shall meet before the throne,
> Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
> And make its wonders known.

Let us then, dear Sir, be of good courage; all the saints on earth, all the saints in heaven, the angels of the Lord, yea, the Lord of angels himself, all are on our side. Though the company is large, yet there is room; there are many mansions;—a place for you; a place, I trust, for worthless me.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

ON THE GRADUAL INCREASE OF GOSPEL-ILLUMINATION.

DEAR SIR,

THE day is now breaking: how beautiful its appearance! how welcome the expectation of the approaching sun! It is this thought makes the dawn agreeable, that it is the presage of a brighter light; otherwise, if we expect no more day than it is this minute, we should rather complain of darkness, than rejoice in the early beauties of the morning. Thus the life of grace is the dawn of immortality; beautiful beyond expression, if compared with the night and thick darkness which formerly covered us, yet faint, indistinct, and unsatisfying, in comparison of the glory which shall be revealed.

It is, however, a sure earnest. So surely as we now see the light of the Sun of righteousness, so surely shall we see the Sun himself, Jesus the Lord, in all his glory and lustre. In the mean time, we have reason to be thankful for a measure of light to walk and work by, and sufficient to shew us the pits and snares by which we might be endangered; and we have a promise, that our present light shall grow stronger and stronger, if we are diligent in the use of the appointed means, till the messenger of Jesus shall lead us within the vail, and then farewell shades and obscurity for ever!

I can now almost see to write, and shall soon put the extinguisher over my candle. I do this without the least reluctance, when I enjoy a better light; but I should have been unwilling half an hour ago. Just thus, methinks, when the light of the glorious gospel shines into the heart, all our former feeble lights, our apprehensions, and our contrivances, become at once unnecessary and unnoticed. How cheerfully did the apostle put out the candle of his own righteousness, attainments, and diligence, when the true Sun arose upon him? Phil. iii. 7, 8. Your last letter is as a comment upon his determination. Adored be the grace that has given us to be like-minded, even to "account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

While I am writing, a new lustre, which gilds the house on the hill, opposite to my study-window, informs me that the sun is now rising: he is rising to others, but not yet to me; my situation is lower, so that they enjoy a few gleams of sunshine before me; yet this momentary difference is inconsiderable, when compared to the duration of a whole day. Thus, some are called by grace earlier in life, and some later; but the seeming difference will be lost and vanish when the great day of

eternity comes on. There is a time, the Lord's best appointed time, when he will arise and shine upon many a soul that now sits "in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death."

I have been thinking on the Lord's conference with Nicodemus: it is a copious subject, and affords room, in one part or other, for the whole round of doctrinal or experimental topics. Nicodemus is an encouraging example to those who are seeking the Lord's salvation. He had received some favourable impressions of Jesus; but he was very ignorant, and much under the fear of man. He durst only come by night, and at first, though he heard, he understood not; but he, who opens the eyes of the blind, brought him surely, though gently, forward. The next time we hear of him, he durst put in a word in behalf of Christ, even in the midst of his enemies, John vii; and at last, he had the courage openly and publicly to assist in preparing the body of his Master for its funeral, at a time when our Lord's more avowed followers had all forsaken him, and fled. So true is that, "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord;" and again, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength."

Hope then, my soul, against hope: though thy graces are faint and languid, he who planted them, will water his own work, and not suffer them wholly to die. He can make a little one as a thousand; at his presence mountains sink into plains, streams gush out of the flinty rock, and the wilderness blossoms as the rose. He can pull down what sin builds up, and build up what sin pulls down; that which was impossible to us, is easy to him, and he has bid us expect seasons of refreshment from his presence. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

ON UNION WITH CHRIST.

DEAR SIR,

THE union of a believer with Christ is so intimate, so unalterable, so rich in privilege, so powerful in influence, that it cannot be fully represented by any description or similitude taken from earthly things. The mind, like the sight, is incapable of apprehending a great object, without viewing it on different sides. To help our weakness, the nature of this union is illustrated in the scriptures, by four comparisons, each throwing additional light on the subject, yet all falling short of the thing signified.

In our natural state, we are *κλυδωνιζομενοι και φερομενοι*, driven and tossed about by the changing winds of opinion, and the waves of trouble, which hourly disturb and threaten us upon the uncertain sea of human life. But faith, uniting us to Christ, fixes us upon a sure foundation, the Rock of Ages, where we stand immoveable, though storms and floods unite their force against us.

By nature we are separated from the divine life, as branches broken off, withered and fruitless. By grace, through faith, unites us to Christ the living vine, from whom, as the root of all fulness, a constant supply of sap and influence is derived into each of his mystical branches, enabling them to bring forth fruit unto God, and to persevere and abound therein.

By nature we are *στυγητοι και μισουντες*, hateful and abominable in the sight of a holy God, and full of enmity and hatred towards each other. By faith uniting us to Christ, we have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and joint communion among ourselves; even as the members of the same body have each of them union, communion, and sympathy with the head, and with their fellow-members.

In our natural estate, we were cast out naked and destitute, without pity, and without help, Ezek. xvi.; but faith uniting us to Christ, interests us in his righteousness, his riches, and his honours. Our Redeemer is our husband; our debts are paid, our settlement secured, and our names changed.

Thus the Lord Jesus, in declaring himself the foundation, root, head, and husband of his people, takes in all the ideas we can frame of an intimate, vital, and inseparable union. Yet all these fall short of truth; and he has given us one farther similitude, of which we can by no means form a just conception, till we shall be brought to see him as he is in his kingdom, John xvii. 21. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us."

Well may we say, What hath God wrought! How inviolable is the security, how inestimable the privilege, how inexpressible the happiness, of a believer! How greatly is he indebted to grace! He was once afar off, but he is brought nigh to God by the blood of Christ; he was once a child of wrath, but is now an heir of everlasting life. How strong then are his obligations to walk worthy of God, who has called him to his kingdom and glory!

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVIII.

ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, IN WHAT MANNER ARE WE TO EXPECT THE LORD'S PROMISED GUIDANCE, TO INFLUENCE OUR JUDGMENTS, AND DIRECT OUR STEPS IN THE PATH OF DUTY?

DEAR SIR,

It is well for those who are duly sensible of their own weakness and fallability, and of the difficulties with which they are surrounded in life, that the Lord has promised to guide his people with his eye, and to cause them to hear a word behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," when they are in danger of turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. For this purpose he has given us the written word to be a lamp to our feet; and encouraged us to pray for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, that we may rightly understand and apply it. It is, however, too often seen, that many widely deviate from the path of duty, and commit gross and perplexing mistakes, while they profess a sincere desire to know the will of God, and think they have his warrant and authority. This must certainly be owing to misapplication of the rule by which they judge, since the rule itself is infallible, and the promise sure. The scriptures cannot deceive us, if rightly understood; but they may, if perverted, prove the occasion of confirming us in a mistake. The Holy Spirit cannot mislead those who are under his influence; but we may suppose that we are so, when we are not. It may not be unseasonable to offer a few thoughts upon a subject of great importance to the peace of our minds, and to the honour of our holy profession.

Many have been deceived as to what they ought to do, or in forming a judgment beforehand of events in which they are nearly concerned, by expecting direction in ways which the Lord has not warranted.—I shall mention some of the principal of these, for it is not easy to enumerate them all.

Some persons, when two or more things have been in view, and they could not immediately determine which to prefer, have committed their case to the Lord by prayer, and have then proceeded to cast lots; taking it for granted, that after such a solemn appeal, the turning up of the lot might be safely rested in as an answer from God. It is true, the scriptures, and indeed, right reason assures us, that the Lord disposes the lot; and there are several cases recorded in the Old Testament, in which lots were used by divine appointment; but I think neither these, nor the chusing Matthias by lot to the apostleship, are proper precedents for our conduct. In the division of the land of Canaan, in the affair of Achan, and in the nomination of Saul to the kingdom, recourse was had to lots by God's express command. The instance of Matthias likewise was singular, such as can never happen again, namely, the choice of an apostle, who would not have been upon a par with the rest, who were chosen immediately by the Lord, unless He had been pleased to interpose in some extraordinary way; and all these were before the canon of scripture was completed, and before the full descent and communication of the Holy Spirit, who was promised to dwell with the church to the end of time. Under the New-Testament dispensation, we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace, to make our request known to the Lord, and to cast our cares upon him: but we have neither precept nor promise, respecting the use of lots; and to have recourse to them without his appointment, seems to be tempting him rather than honouring him, and to savour more of presumption than dependence. The effects likewise of this expedient, have often been unhappy and hurtful. A sufficient proof how little it is to be trusted to as a guide of our conduct,

Others, when in doubt, have opened the Bible at a venture, and expected to find something to direct them, in the first verse they should cast their eye upon. It is no small discredit to this practice, that the heathens who knew not the Bible, used some of their favourite books in the same way; and grounded their persuasions of what they ought to do, or of what should befal them, according to the passage they happened to open upon. Among the Romans, the writings of Virgil were frequently consulted upon these occasions; which gave rise to the well-known expression of the *Sortes Virgilianæ*. And indeed Virgil is as well adapted to satisfy inquirers in this way, as the Bible itself; for if people will be governed by the occurrence of a single text of scripture, without regarding the context, or duly comparing it with the general tenor of the word of God, and with their own circumstances, they may commit the greatest extravagances, expect the greatest impossibilities, and contradict the plainest dictates of common sense, while they think they have the word of God on their side. Can the opening upon 2 Samuel vii. 3. when Nathan said unto David, "Do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee," be sufficient to determine the lawfulness or expediency of actions? Or can a glance of the eye upon our Lord's words to the woman of Canaan, Matthew xv. 28. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt," amount to a proof, that the present earnest desire of the mind (whatever it may be) shall be surely accomplished? Yet it is certain that matters, big with important consequences, have been engaged in, and the most sanguine expectations formed, upon no better warrant than

dipping (as it is called) upon a text of scripture.

A sudden strong impression of a text, that seems to have some resemblance to the concern upon the mind, has been accepted by many as an infallible token that they were right, and that things would go just as they would have them; or, on the other hand, if the passage bore a threatening aspect, it has filled them with fears and disquietudes, which they have afterwards found were groundless and unnecessary. These impressions, being more out of their power than their former method, have been more generally regarded and trusted to, but have frequently proved no less delusive. It is allowed, that such impressions of a precept or a promise, as humble, animate, or comfort the soul, by giving it a lively sense of the truth contained in the words, are both profitable and pleasant; and many of the Lord's people have been instructed and supported (especially in a time of trouble) by some seasonable word of grace applied and sealed by his Spirit with power to their hearts. But if impressions or impulses are received as a voice from heaven, directing to such particular actions as could not be proved to be duties without them, a person may be unwarily misled into great evils, and gross delusions; and many have been so. There is no doubt but the enemy of our souls, if permitted, can furnish us with scriptures in abundance in this way, and for these purposes.

Some persons judge of the nature and event of their designs, by the freedom which they find in prayer. They say, they commit their ways to God, seek his direction, and are favoured with much enlargement of spirit; and therefore they cannot doubt but what they have in view is acceptable in the Lord's sight. I would not absolutely reject every plea of this kind, yet without other corroborating evidence I could not admit it in proof of what it is brought for. It is not always easy to determine when we have spiritual freedom in prayer. Self is deceitful; and when our hearts are much fixed and bent upon a thing, this may put words and earnestness into our mouths. Too often we first secretly determine for ourselves, and then come to ask counsel of God; in such a disposition we are ready to catch at every thing that may seem to favour our darling scheme: and the Lord, for the detection and chastisement of our hypocrisy (for hypocrisy it is, though perhaps hardly perceptible to ourselves), may answer us according to our idols; see Ezekiel xiv. 3, 4. Besides, the grace of prayer may be in exercise, when the subject-matter of the prayer may be founded upon a mistake, from the intervention of circumstances which we are unacquainted with. Thus, I may have a friend in a distant country: I hope he is alive, I pray for him, and it is my duty so to do. The Lord, by his Spirit, assists his people in what is their present duty. If I am enabled to pray with much liberty for my distant friend, it may be a proof that the Spirit of the Lord is pleased to assist my infirmities, but it is no proof that my friend is certainly alive at the time I am praying for him. and if the next time I pray for him I should find my spirit straitened, I am not to conclude that my friend is dead, and therefore the Lord will not assist me in praying for him any longer.

Once more, a remarkable dream has sometimes been thought as decisive as any of the foregoing methods of knowing the will of God. That many wholesome and seasonable admonitions have been received in dreams, I willingly allow; but though they may be occasionally noticed, to pay a great attention to dreams, especially to be guided by them, to form our sentiments, conduct our expectations upon them, is superstitious and dangerous. The promises are not made to those who dream, but to those who watch.

Upon the whole, though the Lord may give to some persons, upon some occasions, a hint or encouragement out of the common way, yet expressly to look for and seek his direction in such things as I have mentioned is unscriptural and ensnaring. I could fill many sheets with a detail of the inconveniences and evils which have followed such a dependence, within the course of my own observation. I have seen some presuming they were doing God's service while acting in contradiction to his express commands. I have known others, infatuated to believe a lie, declaring themselves assured, beyond the shadow of a doubt, of things which, after all, never came to pass; and, when at length disappointed, Satan has improved the occasion to make them doubt of the plainest and most important truths, and to account their whole former experience a delusion. By these things weak believers have been stumbled, cavils and offences against the gospel multiplied, and the ways of truth evil spoken of.

But how, then, may the Lord's guidance be expected? After what has been premised negatively, the question may be answered in a few words. In general, he guides and directs his people by affording them, in answer to prayer, the light of his Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to love the scriptures. The word of God is not to be used as a lottery, nor is it designed to instruct us by shreds and scraps, which, detached from their proper places, have no determined import, but it is to furnish us with just principles, right apprehensions, to regulate our judgments and affections, and thereby to influence and direct our conduct. They who study the scriptures, in an humble dependence upon divine teaching, are convinced of their own weakness, are taught to make a true es

tinate of every thing around them, are gradually formed into a spirit of submission to the will of God, discover the nature and duties of their several situations and relations in life, and the snares and temptations to which they are exposed. The word of God dwells richly in them, is a preservative from error, a light to their feet, and a spring of strength and consolation. By treasuring up the doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, and exhortations of scripture in their minds, and daily comparing themselves with the rule by which they walk, they grow into a habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquire a gracious taste, which enables them to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty, as a musical ear judges of sounds; and they are seldom mistaken, because they are influenced by the love of Christ which rules in their hearts, and a regard to the glory of God, which is the great objects they have in view.

In particular cases the Lord opens and shuts for them, breaks down walls of difficulty which obstruct their path, or hedges up their way with thorns, when they are in danger of going wrong, by the dispensations of his providence. They know that their concernments are in his hands; they are willing to follow whither and when he leads, but are afraid of going before him. Therefore they are not impatient. Because they believe, they will not make haste, but wait daily upon him in prayer; especially when they find their hearts most engaged in any purpose or pursuit, they are most jealous of being deceived by appearances, and dare not move farther or faster than they can perceive his light shining upon their paths. I express at least their desire, if not their attainment: thus they would be. And though there are seasons when faith languishes, and self too much prevails, this is their general disposition, and the Lord, whom they serve, does not disappoint their expectations; he leads them by a right way, preserves them from a thousand snares, and satisfies them that he is and will be their guide even unto death.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIX.

THOUGHTS ON ROM. VIII. 19, 20, 21.

DEAR SIR,

THE apostle evidently introduces this passage in confirmation of what he had said before, ver. 17, 18. The privileges of the children of God are not only great, but sure. Every thing we see confirms our expectation of what God has promised. The whole frame of nature, in its present state of imperfection, strongly pleads for a future and better dispensation, as necessary to vindicate the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God; and this shall take place when the sons of God shall be manifested, and shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. It would be injurious to the honour of God to suppose that things were at first created in the state they are now in, or that they will always continue so, and therefore the creature, which was originally designed to show forth the glory of God, is represented as burdened and groaning till those impediments are removed which prevent it from fully answering its proper end.

Dr. Guyse's proposal of reading the 20th verse (the words *in hope* excepted) in a parenthesis, seems greatly to free the sense from embarrassment. Then the proposition in the 19th and 21st verses will be, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth in hope for the manifestation of the sons of God; because then the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption," &c. The 20th verse expresses the creature's present state, "It is subject to vanity;" and intimates the cause, "Not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same."

By the *creature* some understand mankind, as the word is used Mark xvi. 15; and it is certain that, partly from imperfect tradition, and partly from a general rumour of the prophecies extant among the Jews, the heathens had some confused apprehension of a deliverer from misery; agreeably to which, or rather on account of their need of a saviour, whether they knew it or not, Christ is styled "the desire of all nations." But this does not seem to be the sense; because the creature here is said to be subject to vanity, *not willingly*, and is represented as groaning, travailing, and longing (ver. 22.) for deliverance. But it is so far from being the concurrent desire of all mankind, or indeed the desire of any single person, to obtain freedom from the bondage of sin, that we are naturally pleased with it, and yield a willing subjection. Besides, the period referred to is beyond the present life, and intends not a partial relief here, but a full deliverance hereafter. It seems, therefore, that *creature*, in these verses, and *creation*, in ver. 22, as they are both expressed by the same word in the Greek, are to be taken in the same sense. The whole frame of this lower world, which is now subject to vanity on account of the sin of man, is represented as longing and waiting for deliverance.

The word ἀποκαραδοκια, which we render "earnest expectation," is very emphatical; it imports a raising up or thrusting forward the head, as persons who are in suspense for the return of a messenger, or the issue of some interesting event. Compare Judges v. 28, Luke xxi. 28. It occurs but once more in the New Testament, Phil. i, 20, where the apostle is describing, in one view, the confidence of his

hope and the many conflicts and oppositions which were the daily exercise of his faith.

Now it is a frequent beauty in the scripture language to apply human affections to the inanimate creation, and these expressions are to be taken in a figurative sense, as denoting the importance and evidence of what is said. See Gen. iv. 11, Is. i. 2, Luke xix. 40. The "earnest expectation of the creature," therefore, teaches us two things, the weight and burden of the evils under which the world groans, and the sure purpose of God to restore all things by Jesus Christ. There is a period approaching when all that is now rough and crooked shall be made plain and straight. The Lord has promised it, and therefore all his works are represented as expecting and waiting for it.

This shall be at "the manifestation of the sons of God." They are now hidden, unknown, unnoticed, and misrepresented, for the most part. Their life is in many respects hidden from themselves, and their privileges altogether hidden from the world; but ere long they will be manifested, their God will openly acknowledge them, every cloud by which they are now obscured shall be removed, and they shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They have now a gracious liberty; they are freed from condemnation, from the power of sin, from the law as a covenant of works, from the yoke of carnal ordinances, from the traditions and inventions of men, and from the spirit of bondage; yet they suffer much from indwelling sin, the temptations of Satan, and their situation in a wicked and ensnaring world. But they are animated with the hope of a glorious liberty, when every evil, imperfection, and abatement *shall* cease, when they shall be put in the full possession of a happiness answerable to the riches of divine love and the efficacy of the blood and mediation of Jesus, and then the curse shall be fully removed from the creation; the Lord shall create all things new, and again pronounce all things good. When they are thus manifested, the creature's expectation shall be answered; it shall be restored to its honour and use. Under what circumstances, and to what particular purposes, this change will take place we know not, but a change worthy of divine wisdom, though beyond the limits of our weak apprehensions, we are warranted from scripture to expect. It is asserted in this passage, to which, perhaps, we may properly add 2 Pet. iii. 13, Rev. xxi. 1. It would be easy to indulge in vain conjectures upon this subject, but it is more safe to restrain them, and to content ourselves with what is clearly revealed. The hour is coming when all difficulties shall be explained, when the mysterious plan of divine providence shall be unfolded, vindicated, and completed; then it shall appear that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head and restorer of the creation, and how fully, in every sense, he has repaired the ruin brought into the world by sin, and destroyed the works of the devil.

In the meantime, the sons of God groan, waiting for their adoption, and the creation groans with them At present it is subject to vanity. Its original design was to fulfil the will, and to set forth the glory of God; but, by the sin of man, it is disappointed with respect to these ends, not absolutely, for still the heavens declare his glory and the earth is full of his goodness, but, with regard to outward appearances, there is a great abatement in both these respects. We may instance a few particulars in which the creature is abused and oppressed, contrary to the design of its creation.

The creature was intended to show forth the glory of God; but here it has been disappointed, and has groaned, being burdened in all ages. Vain man has always been disposed to serve and worship the creature more than the Creator. The whole world formerly, except the Jews, were sunk in idolatry, paying divine honours to the sun and moon, yea, to stocks and stones; and a great part of the earth is to this moment covered with the same darkness. When this is the case, the creature groans under vanity, being perverted directly contrary to its proper end; and there is another idolatry, if not so gross, yet in us more inexcusable, by which the generality of those who bear the name of christians are no less alienated from the knowledge and love of the true God, than the heathens themselves.

Again, the creatures, as the servants of God, are properly designed to promote the welfare of his children, 1 Cor iii. 22, Job v. 23. This great end is indeed finally secured by the promise, that all shall work together for their good; but at present they are exposed to great sufferings; all things seem to come alike to all. This, on the Lord's part, is a wise and gracious appointment for the exercise of faith, the mortification of sin, and the advancement of sanctification; but still, in itself, it is a vanity under which the creation groans. When Jesus was crucified in person, the sun withdrew his light, rocks rent, and the earth quaked. There is a proportionable constraint upon nature when he suffers in his members. Sometimes this part of the vanity has been suspended, as in the case of Daniel and his companions; and, doubtless, the creatures would in general reverence the Heir of glory, were not the effects of sin upon them continued for wise reasons. They were subject to man, when man was subject to his Maker. At present there is an apparent inconsistence, when beasts, and storms, and seas rage against those whom the Creator is pleased to favour.

Once more, the creatures of God might be expected to engage in his behalf against his enemies; but it is subject to vanity here likewise. The earth is the Lord's yet the chief

parts and possessions of it are in the hands of those who hate him; yea, his enemies employ his creatures against his own friends. Surely, if the secret powerful restraint of his providence were taken off, it would be otherwise. How ready all the creatures are to fight in the Lord's cause, if he please to employ them, we may learn from the history of Egypt, in Exodus, from the death of Dathan and Abiram, and the destruction of Sennacherib's army. It is therefore a bondage introduced by sin, and under which they groan, that they are compelled to prolong the lives and serve the occasions of ungodly sinners.

The effect being manifest, that the creature is subject to vanity, the apostle briefly intimates the cause: "Not willingly." The creature, considered in itself, is not in fault. All things were created good in the beginning, and in themselves are good still. Not the fault, but the perversion and subjection of the creature, are here complained of. A beauty, variety, and order in the works of God are still discernible, sufficient to fill an attentive and enlightened mind with wonder, love, and praise; though it must be allowed, that sin has not only alienated our hearts, and disabled our faculties, so that we cannot rightly contemplate God and his works, but has likewise occasioned a considerable alteration in the visible state of things. One instance is expressly specified, Gen. iii. 16.

The positive cause is ascribed to "him who has subjected the same." These words may bear three different senses in agreement with the current doctrine of the scriptures. The prime author of the mischief was Satan. Full of malice and enmity against God and his creatures, he attempted to bring evil into this lower world, and was permitted to succeed; the Lord purposing to over-rule it to his own glory. But, for a season, the work of the devil has been to introduce and maintain a sad scene of vanity and misery. Our first father Adam was the direct and immediate cause of the entrance of sin and vanity into the creation. He was created upright, and all things good about him; but he listened to Satan, and sinned, and by his sin

Brought death into the world, and all our woe;

for we were concerned in his transgression, as he was our head, both in nature and law. But we may refer the *him* to God; and this seems best to suit the apostle's design here. God, the righteous judge, subjected the creature to vanity, as the just consequence and desert of man's disobedience. But he has subjected it in hope; with a reserve in favour of his own people, by which, though they are liable to trouble, they are secured from the penal desert of sin, and the vanity of the creature is, by his wisdom, over-ruled to wise and gracious purposes. The earth, and all in it, was made for the sake of man; for his sin it was first cursed, and afterwards destroyed by water; and sin at last shall set it on fire. But God, who is rich in mercy, appointed a people to himself out of the fallen race. For their sakes, and as a theatre whereon to display the wonders of his providence and grace, it was renewed after the flood, and still continues, but not in its original state; there are marks of the evil of sin, and of God's displeasure against it, wherever we turn our eyes. This truth is witnessed to by every thing without us, and within us. But there shall be a deliverance to those who fear him; and by his word and Spirit, he teaches them to receive instruction and benefit even from this root of bitterness. Even now they are the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what they will be when he shall appear, and be admired in all them that believe. Then they shall be manifested, and then the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

How blind, then, are they who expect happiness from the creature, which is itself subject to vanity, and who are meanly content with the present state of things? It is because they are estranged from God, have no sense of his excellency, no regard for his glory, no knowledge of their own proper good. They are farther removed from the desires they ought to have, in their present circumstances, than the brute creation, or the very ground they walk on; for all things but man have an instinct, or natural principle to answer the end for which they were appointed. Fire and hail, wind and storm, fulfil the word of God, though we poor mortals dare to disobey it. But if the secret voice of the whole creation desires the consummation of all things, surely they who have the light of God's word and Spirit will look forward, and long for that glorious day. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!

I am, &c.

LETTER XXX.

ON THE RIGHT USE OF THE LAW.

DEAR SIR,

YOU desire my thoughts on 1 Tim. i. 8. "We know the law is good if a man use it lawfully," and I willingly comply. I do not mean to send you a sermon on the text; yet a little attention to method may not be improper upon this subject, though in a letter to a friend. Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes. This is the root of self-righteousness, the grand reason why the gospel of Christ is no more regarded, and the cause of that uncertainty and inconsistency in many, who, though they profess themselves teachers, understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. If we previously state what is meant by the law, and by what means we know the

law to be good, I think it will, from these premises, be easy to conclude what it is to use the law lawfully.

The law, in many passages of the Old Testament, signifies the whole revelation of the will of God, as in Psalm i. 2. and xix. 7. But the law, in a strict sense, is contradistinguished from the gospel. Thus, the apostle considers it at large in his epistle to the Romans and Galatians. I think it is evident, that, in the passage you have proposed, the apostle is speaking of the law of Moses. But, to have a clearer view of the subject, it may be proper to look back to a more early period.

The law of God, then, in the largest sense, is that rule, or prescribed course, which he has appointed for his creatures, according to their several natures and capacities, that they may answer the end for which he has created them. Thus it comprehends the inanimate creation: the wind and storm fulfil his word, or law. He hath appointed the moon for seasons; and the sun knoweth his time of going down, and going forth, and performs all his revolutions according to his Maker's pleasure. If we could suppose the sun was an intelligent being, and should refuse to shine, or should wander from the station in which God had placed him, he would then be a transgressor of the law. But there is no such disorder in the natural world. The law of God in this sense, or what many chuse to call the law of nature, is no other than the impression of God's power, whereby all things continue and act according to his will from the beginning; for "he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

The animals, destitute of reason, are likewise under a law; that is, God has given them instincts according to their several kinds, for their support and preservation, to which they invariably conform. A wisdom unspeakably superior to all the contrivance of man disposes their concernments, and is visible in the structure of a bird's nest, or the economy of a bee-hive. But this wisdom is restrained within narrow limits; they act without any remote design, and are incapable either of good or evil in a moral sense.

When God created man, he taught him more than the beasts of the earth, and made him wiser than the fowls of heaven. He formed him for himself, breathed into him a spirit immortal and incapable of dissolution, gave him a capacity not to be satisfied with any creature-good, endued him with an understanding, will, and affections, which qualified him for the knowledge and service of his Maker, and a life of communion with him. The law of God, therefore, concerning man, is that rule of disposition and conduct to which a creature so constituted ought to conform; so that the end of his creation might be answered and the wisdom of God be manifested in him and by him. Man's continuance in this regular and happy state was not necessary as it is in the creatures, who, having no rational faculties, have properly no choice, but act under the immediate agency of divine power. As man was capable of continuing in the state in which he was created, so he was capable of forsaking it. He did so, and sinned, by eating the forbidden fruit. We are not to suppose that this prohibition was the whole of the law of Adam, so that if he had abstained from the tree of knowledge, he might, in other respects, have done (as we say) what he pleased. This injunction was the test of his obedience; and while he regarded it, he could have no desire contrary to holiness, because his nature was holy. But when he broke through it, he broke through the whole law, and stood guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, rebellion, and murder. The divine light in his soul was extinguished, the image of God defaced; he became like Satan, whom he had obeyed, and lost his power to keep that law which was connected with his happiness. Yet, still the law remained in force: the blessed God could not lose his right to that reverence, love, and obedience, which must always be due to him from his intelligent creatures. Thus Adam became a transgressor, and incurred the penalty, death. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to his eternal purpose, revealed the promise of the seed of the woman, and instituted sacrifices as types of that atonement for sin, which He, in the fulness of time, should accomplish by the sacrifice of himself.

Adam, after his fall, was no longer a public person; he was saved by grace through faith; but the depravity he had brought upon human nature remained. His children, and so all his posterity, were born in his sinful likeness, without either ability or inclination to keep the law. The earth was soon filled with violence. But a few in every successive age were preserved by grace, and faith in the promise. Abraham was favoured with a more full and distinct revelation of the covenant of grace; he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced. In the time of Moses, God was pleased to set apart a peculiar people to himself, and to them he published his law with great solemnity at Sinai. This law consisted of two distinct parts, very different in their scope and design, though both enjoined by the same authority.

The decalogue, or ten commandments, uttered by the voice of God himself, is an abstract of that original law under which man was created; but published in a prohibitory form, the Israelites, like the rest of mankind, being depraved by sin, and strongly inclined to the commission of every evil. This law could not be designed as a covenant, by obedience to which man should be justified; for long before its publication, the gospel had been preached to Abraham, Galatians iii. 8. But the law entered that sin might abound; that

the extent, the evil, and the desert of sin might be known; for it reaches to the most hidden thoughts of the heart, requires absolute and perpetual obedience, and denounces a curse upon all who continue not therein.

To this was superadded the ceremonial or levitical law, prescribing a variety of institutions, purifications, and sacrifices, the observance of which were, during that dispensation, absolutely necessary to the acceptable worship of God. By obedience to these prescriptions, the people of Israel preserved their legal right to the blessings promised to them as a nation, and which were not confined to spiritual worshippers only; and they were likewise ordinances and helps to lead those who truly feared God, and had conscience of sin, to look forward, by faith, to the great sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who, in the fulness of time, was to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. In both these respects, the ceremonial law was abrogated by the death of Christ. The Jews then ceased to be God's peculiar people; and Jesus having expiated sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, by his obedience unto death, all other sacrifices became unnecessary and vain. The gospel supplies the place of the ceremonial law, to the same advantage as the sun abundantly compensates for the twinkling of the stars, and the feeble glimmering of moon-light, which are concealed by its glory. Believers of old were relieved from the strictness of the moral law by the sacrifices which pointed to Christ. Believers under the gospel are relieved by a direct application to the blood of the covenant. Both renounce any dependence on the moral law for justification, and both accept it as a rule of life in the hands of the Mediator, and are enabled to yield it a sincere, though not a perfect obedience.

If an Israelite, trusting in his obedience to the moral law, had ventured to reject the ordinances of the ceremonial, he would have been cut off. In like manner, if any who are called christians are so well satisfied with their moral duties, that they see no necessity of making Christ their only hope, the law, by which they seek life, will be to them a ministration unto death. Christ, and he alone, delivers us, by faith in his name, from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us.

A second inquiry is, How we come to know the law to be good? for naturally we do not, we cannot, think so. We cannot be at enmity with God, and at the same time approve of his law; rather this is the ground of our dislike to him, that we conceive the law, by which we are to be judged, is too strict in its precepts, and too severe in its threatenings; and therefore men, so far as in them lies, are for altering this law. They think it would be better if it required no more than we can perform; if it allowed us more liberty; and especially if it was not armed against transgressors with the penalty of everlasting punishment. This is evident from the usual pleas of unawakened sinners. Some think, "I am not so bad as some others;" by which they mean, God will surely make a difference, and take favourable notice of what they suppose good in themselves. Others plead, "If I should not obtain mercy, what will become of the greater part of mankind?" by which they plainly intimate, that it would be hard and unjust in God to punish such multitudes. Others endeavour to extenuate their sins, as Jonathan once said, "I did but taste a little honey, and I must die:" "These passions are natural to me, and must I die for indulging them!" In short, the spirituality and strictness of the law, its severity, and its levelling effect, confounding all seeming differences in human characters, and stopping every mouth without distinction, are three properties of the law, which the natural man cannot allow to be good.

These prejudices against the law can only be removed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to enlighten and convince the conscience; to communicate an impression of the majesty, holiness, justice, and authority of the God with whom we have to do, whereby the evil and desert of sin are apprehended. The sinner is then stript of all his vain pretences, is compelled to plead guilty, and must justify his Judge, even though he should condemn him. It is his office likewise to discover the grace and glory of the Saviour, as having fulfilled the law for us, and as engaged, by promise, to enable those who believe in him to honour it with a due obedience in their own persons. Then a change of judgment takes place, and the sinner consents to the law, that it is holy, just, and good. Then the law is acknowledged to be holy; it manifests the holiness of God; and a conformity to it is the perfection of human nature. There can be no excellence in man, but so far as he is influenced by God's law; without it, the greater his natural powers and abilities are, he is but so much the more detestable and mischievous. It is assented to as just, springing from his indubitable right and authority over his creatures, and suited to their dependence upon him, and the abilities with which he originally endowed them. And though we, by sin, have lost those abilities, his right remains unalienable; and therefore he can justly punish transgressors. And as it is just in respect to God, so it is good for man; his obedience to the law, and the favour of God therein, being his proper happiness, and it is impossible for him to be happy in any other way. Only, as I have hinted, to sinners these things must be applied according to the gospel, and to their new relation, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has obeyed the law, and made atonement for sin on their be-

half; so that through him they are delivered from condemnation, and entitled to all the benefits of his obedience. From him likewise they receive the law, as a rule enforced by his own example, and their unspeakable obligations to his redeeming love. This makes obedience pleasing, and the strength they derive from him makes it easy.

We may now proceed to inquire, in the last place, What it is to use the law lawfully? The expression implies, that it may be used unlawfully; and it is so by too many. It is not a lawful use of the law to seek justification and acceptance with God by our obedience to it; because it is not appointed for this end, or capable of answering it, in our circumstances. The very attempt is a daring impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God; for if righteousness could come by the law, then Christ has died in vain, Gal. ii. 21, iii. 21; so that such a hope is not only groundless, but sinful; and, when persisted in under the light of the gospel, is no less than a wilful rejection of the grace of God. Again, it is an unlawful use of the law, that is, an abuse of it, an abuse both of law and gospel, to pretend that its accomplishment by Christ releases believers from any obligation to it as a rule. Such an assertion is not only wicked, but absurd and impossible in the highest degree; for the law is founded in the relation between the Creator and the creature, and must unavoidably remain in force so long as that relation subsists. While he is God, and we are creatures, in every possible or supposable change of state or circumstances, he must have an unrivalled claim to our reverence, love, trust, service, and submission. No true believer can deliberately admit a thought or a wish of being released from his obligation of obedience to God, in whole or in part; he will rather start from it with abhorrence. But Satan labours to drive unstable souls from one extreme to the other, and has too often succeeded. Wearied with vain endeavours to keep the law, that they might obtain life by it, and afterwards taking up with a notion of the gospel devoid of power, they have at length despised that obedience which is the honour of a christian, and essentially belongs to his character, and have abused the grace of God to licentiousness. But we have not so learned Christ.

To speak affirmatively, the law is lawfully used as a means of conviction of sin. For this purpose it was promulgated at Sinai. The law entered, that sin might abound: not to make men more wicked, though occasionally, and by abuse, it has that effect, but to make them sensible how wicked they are. Having God's law in our hands, we are no longer to form our judgments by the maxims and customs of the world, where evil is called good, and good evil; but are to try every principle, temper, and practice by this standard. Could men be prevailed upon to do this, they would soon listen to the gospel with attention. On some the Spirit of God does thus prevail; then they earnestly make the jailor's inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Here the work of grace begins; and the sinner, condemned in his own conscience, is brought to Jesus for life.

Again, when we use the law as a glass, to behold the glory of God, we use it lawfully. His glory is eminently revealed in Christ; but much of it is with a special reference to the law, and cannot be otherwise discerned. We see the perfection and excellence of the law in his life. God was glorified by his obedience as a man. What a perfect character did he exhibit! yet it is no other than a transcript of the law. Such would have been the character of Adam and all his race, had the law been duly obeyed. It appears, therefore, a wise and holy institution, fully capable of displaying that perfection of conduct by which man would have answered the end of his creation. And we see the inviolable strictness of the law in his death. There the glory of God in the law is manifested. Though he was the beloved Son, and had yielded personal obedience in the utmost perfection, yet, when he stood in our place, to make atonement for sin, he was not spared. From what he endured in Gethsemane and upon the cross, we learn the meaning of that awful sentence, "The soul that sinneth shall die."

Another lawful use of the law is, to consult it as a rule and pattern, by which to regulate our spirit and conversation. The grace of God, received by faith, will dispose us to obedience in general; but through remaining darkness and ignorance, we are much at a loss as to particulars. We are, therefore, sent to the law, that we may learn how to walk worthy of God, who has called us to his kingdom and glory; and every precept has its proper place and use.

Lastly, we use the law lawfully when we improve it as a test whereby to judge of the exercise of grace. Believers differ so much from what they once were, and from what many still are, that without this right use of the law, comparing themselves with their former selves, or with others, they would be prone to think more highly of their attainments than they ought. But when they recur to this standard, they sink into the dust, and adopt the language of Job, "Behold, I am vile: I cannot answer thee one of a thousand."

From hence we may collect, in brief, how the law is good to them that use it lawfully. It furnishes them with a comprehensive and accurate view of the will of God, and the path of duty. By the study of the law, they acquire an habitual spiritual taste of what is right or wrong. The exercised believer, like a skilful workman, has a rule in his hand,

whereby he can measure and determine with certainty; whereas others judge as it were by the eye, and can only make a random guess, in which they are generally mistaken. It likewise, by reminding them of their deficiencies and short-comings, is a sanctified means of making and keeping them humble; and it exceedingly endears Jesus, the law-fulfiller, to their hearts, and puts them in mind of their obligations to him, and of their absolute dependence upon him every moment.

If these reflections should prove acceptable to you, I have my desire; and I send them to you by the press, in hopes that the Lord may accompany them, with his blessing to others. The subject is of great importance, and, were it rightly understood, might conduce to settle some of the angry controversies which have been lately agitated. Clearly to understand the distinction, connection, and harmony between the law and the gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege, and a happy means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right hand or the left.

I am, &c. Jan 20, 1776

LETTER XXXI.

ON LOVE TO THE BRETHREN.

DEAR SIR,

THE apostle having said, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," immediately subjoins, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." By the manner of his expression, he sufficiently intimates, that the want of this love is so universal, till the Lord plants it in the heart, that if we possess it, we may thereby be sure he has given us of his Spirit, and delivered us from condemnation. But as the heart is deceitful, and people may be awfully mistaken in the judgment they form of themselves, we have need to be very sure that we rightly understand what it is to love the brethren, before we draw the apostle's conclusion from it, and admit it as an evidence in our own favour, that we have passed from death unto life. Let me invite you, reader, to attend with me a little to this subject.

There are some counterfeits of this love to the brethren, which, it is to be feared, have often been mistaken for it, and have led people to think themselves something, when, indeed, they were nothing. For instance:

There is a natural love of the brethren. People may sincerely love their relations, friends, and benefactors, who are of the brethren, and yet be utter strangers to the spiritual love the apostle speaks of. So Orpah had a great affection for Naomi, though it was not strong enough to make her willing, with Ruth, to leave her native country, and her idol-gods Natural affection can go no farther than to a personal attachment; and they who thus love the brethren, and upon no better ground, are often disgusted with those things in them, for which the real brethren chiefly love one another.

There is likewise a love of convenience. The Lord's people are gentle, peaceable, benevolent, swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. They are desirous of adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, and approving themselves followers of him who pleased not himself, but spent his life in doing good to others. Upon this account they who are full of themselves, and love to have their own way, may like their company, because they find more compliances, and less opposition from them, than from such as themselves. For a while Laban loved Jacob: he found him diligent and trust-worthy, and perceived that the Lord had prospered him upon Jacob's account; but when he saw that Jacob flourished, and apprehended he was likely to do without him, his love was soon at an end; for it was only founded in self-interest.

A party-love is also common. The objects of this are those who are of the same sentiment, who worship in the same way, or are attached to the same minister. They who are united in such narrow and separate associations, may express warm affections, without giving any proof of true christian love; for, upon such grounds as these, not only professed Christians, but Jews and Turks, may be said to love one another. Though it must be allowed, that believers being renewed but in part, the love which they bear to the brethren is too often debased and allayed by a mixture of selfish affections.

The principle of true love to the brethren, is the LOVE OF GOD, that love which produceth obedience, 1 John v. 2. "By this we know that we love the children of God, if we love God, and keep his commandments." When people are free to form their connections and friendships, the ground of their communion is in a sameness of inclination. The love spoken of is spiritual. The children of God, who therefore stand in the relation of brethren to each other, though they have too many unhappy differences in points of smaller importance, agree in the supreme love they bear to their heavenly Father, and to Jesus their Saviour; of course they agree in disliking and avoiding sin, which is contrary to the will and command of the God whom they love and worship. Upon these accounts they love one another, they are like-minded; and they live in a world where the bulk of mankind are against them, have no regard to their Beloved, and live in the sinful practices which his grace has taught them to hate. Their situation, therefore, increases their affection to each other. They are washed by the same blood,

supplied by the same grace, opposed by the same enemies, and have the same heaven in view; therefore they love one another with a pure heart fervently.

The properties of this love, where its exercise is not greatly impeded by ignorance and bigotry, are such as prove its heavenly original. It extends to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, cannot be confined within the pale of a denomination, nor restrained to those with whom it is more immediately connected. It is gentle, and not easily provoked; hopes the best, makes allowances for infirmities, and is easily intreated. It is kind and compassionate; and this, not in words only, but sympathizes with the afflicted, and relieves the indigent, according to its ability; and as it primarily respects the image of Christ in its objects, it feels a more peculiar attachment to those whom it judges to be the most spiritual, though without undervaluing or despising the weakest attainments in the true grace of the gospel.

They are happy who thus love the brethren. They have passed from death unto life; and may plead this gracious disposition, though not before the Lord as the ground of their hope, yet against Satan, when he would tempt them to question their right to the promises. But, alas! as I before hinted, the exercise of this love, when it really is implanted, is greatly obstructed through the remaining depravity which cleaves to believers. We cannot be too watchful against those tempers which weaken the proper effects of brotherly love, and thereby have a tendency to darken the evidence of our having passed from death unto life. We live in a day, when the love of many (of whom we would hope the best) is, at least, grown very cold. The effects of a narrow, suspicious, a censorious, and a selfish spirit, are but too evident amongst professors of the gospel. If I were to insist at large upon the offences of this kind which abound amongst us, I should seem almost reduced to the necessity, either of retracting what I have advanced, or of maintaining, that a great part (if not the greatest part) of those who profess to know the Lord, are deceiving themselves with a form of godliness, being destitute of its power: for though they may abound in knowledge and gifts, and have much to say upon the subject of christian experience, they appear to want the great, the inimitable, the indispensible criterion of true christianity, a love to the brethren; without which all other seeming advantages and attainments are of no avail. How is this disagreeable dilemma to be avoided?

I believe they who are most under the influence of divine love, will join with me in lamenting their deficiency. It is well that we are not under the law, but under grace; for on whatever point we try ourselves by the standard of the sanctuary, we shall find reason to say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord." There is an amazing and humbling difference between the conviction we have of the beauty and excellence of divine truths, and our actual experience of their power ruling in our hearts. In our happiest hours, when we are most affected with the love of Jesus, we feel our love fervent towards his people. We wish it were always so; but we are poor, inconsistent creatures, and find we can do nothing as we ought, but as we are enabled by his grace. But we trust we do not allow ourselves in what is wrong; and, notwithstanding, we may, in particular instances, be misled by ignorance and prejudice, we do in our hearts love the brethren, account them the excellent of the earth, and desire to have our lot and portion with them in time and in eternity. We know that the love we bear them is for his sake; and when we consider his interest in them, and our obligations to him, we are ashamed and grieved that we love them no better.

If we could not conscientiously say thus much, we should have just reason to question our sincerity, and the safety of our state; for the scriptures cannot be broken; nor can the grace of God fail of producing, in some degree, its proper fruits. Our Saviour, before whom we must shortly appear as our judge, has made love the characteristic of his disciples; and without some evidence that this is the prevailing disposition of our hearts, we could find little comfort in calling him God. Let not this be accounted legality, as if our dependence was upon something in ourselves. The question is not concerning the method of acceptance with God, but concerning the fruits or tokens of an accepted state. The most eminent of these, by our Lord's express declaration, is brotherly love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." No words can be plainer; and the consequence is equally plain, however hard it may bear upon many professors, that though they could speak with the tongues of angels, had the knowledge of all mysteries, a power of working miracles, and a zeal prompting them to give their bodies to be burned in defence of the truth; yet if they love not the brethren, they are but as sounding brass or tinkling cymbals: they may make a great noise in the church and in the world; they may be wise and able men, as the words are now frequently understood; they may pray or preach with great fluency; but in the sight of God their faith is dead, and their religion is vain.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXII.

ON CANDOUR.

DEAR SIR,

I AM with you an admirer of candour, but let us beware of counterfeits. True candour is a christian grace, and will grow in no soil but a believing heart. It is an eminent and amiable property of that love which beareth, believeth, hopeth, and endureth all things. It forms the most favourable judgment of persons and characters, and puts the kindest construction upon the conduct of others that it possibly can, consistent with the love of truth. It makes due allowances for the infirmities of human nature, will not listen with pleasure to what is said to the disadvantage of any, nor repeat it without a justifiable cause. It will not be confined within the walls of a party, nor restrain the actings of benevolence to those whom it fully approves; but prompts the mind to an imitation of Him who is kind to the evil and the unthankful, and has taught us to consider every person we see as our neighbour.

Such is the candour which I wish to derive from the gospel: and I am persuaded, they who have imbibed most of this spirit, will acknowledge that they are still defective in it. There is an unhappy propensity, even in good men, to a selfish, narrow, censorious turn of mind; and the best are more under the power of prejudice than they are aware. A want of candour among the professors of the same gospel, is too visible in the present day. A truly candid person will acknowledge what is right and excellent in those from whom he may be obliged to differ; he will not charge the faults or extravagancies of a few upon a whole party or denomination. If he thinks it his duty to point out or refute the errors of any persons, he will not impute to them such consequences of their tenets as they expressly disavow; he will not wilfully misrepresent or aggravate their mistakes, or make them offenders for a word: he will keep in view the distinction between those things which are fundamental and essential to the christian life, and those concerning which, a difference of sentiment may, and often has, obtained among true believers. Were there more candour among those who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, the emotions of anger or scorn would not be so often felt or excited, by pronouncing or hearing the words, churchman, or dissenter, or Calvinist, or even Arminian. Let us, my friend, be candid; let us remember how totally ignorant we ourselves once were, how often we have changed our sentiments in one particular or other, since we first engaged in the search of truth; how often we have been imposed upon by appearances; and to how many different persons and occurrences we have been indebted, under God, for the knowledge which we have already attained. Let us likewise consider what treatment we like to meet with from others; and do unto them as we would they should do unto us. These considerations will make the exercise of candour habitual and easy.

But there is a candour, falsely so called, which springs from an indifference to the truth, and is governed by the fear of men and the love of praise. This pretended candour depreciates the most important doctrines of the gospel, and treats them as points of speculation and opinion. It is a temporizing expedient to stand fair with the world, and to avoid that odium which is the unavoidable consequence of a steadfast, open, and hearty adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus. It aims to establish an intercommunity between light and darkness, Christ and Belial; and, under a pretence of avoiding harsh and uncharitable judgments, it introduces a mutual connivance in principles and practices, which are already expressly condemned by clear decisions of scripture. Let us not listen to the advocates for a candour of this sort; such a lukewarm temper in those, who would be thought the friends of the gospel, is treason against God and treachery to the souls of men. It is observable that they who boast most of this candour, and pretend to the most enlarged and liberal way of thinking, are generally agreed to exclude from their comprehension all whom they call bigots; that is, in other words, those who, having been led by divine grace to build their hopes upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion, are free to declare their conviction that other foundation can no man lay; and who, having seen that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, dare no longer conform to its leading maxims or customs, nor express a favourable judgment of the state or conduct of those who do. Candour itself knows not how to be candid to these: their singularity and importunity are offensive; and it is thought no way inconsistent with the specious boast of benevolence and moderation to oppose, hate, and revile them. A sufficient proof that the candour which many plead for is only a softer name for that spirit of the world which opposes itself to the truth and obedience of the gospel.

If a person be an avowed Socinian or deist, I am still to treat him with candour; he has a right from me, so far as he comes in my way, to all the kind offices of humanity. I am not to hate, reproach, or affront him, or to detract from what may be valuable in his character, considered as a member of society. I may avail myself of his talents and abilities in points where I am not in danger of being misled by him. He may be a good lawyer

or historian, or physician; and I am not to lessen him in these respects because I cannot commend him as a divine. I am bound to pity his errors, and to pray if peradventure God will give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; and, if I have a call to converse with him, I should speak with all gentleness and meekness, remembering that grace alone has made me to differ. But I am not to compliment him, to insinuate, or even to admit, that there can be any safety in his principles. Far be that candour from us, which represents the scriptures as a nose of wax, so that a person may reject or elude the testimonies there given to the deity and atonement of Christ, and the all-powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, with impunity.

On the other hand, they who hold the Head, who have received the record which God hath given of his Son; who have scriptural views of sin and grace, and fix their hopes for time and eternity upon the Saviour; in a word, all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;—these, I apprehend, if they are prevented from receiving, acknowledging, and loving each other, as he has received, owned, and loved them, are justly chargeable with a want of candour. Shall I be cold to those whom Jesus loves? Shall I refuse them whom he has accepted? I find, perhaps, that they cannot rightly understand, and therefore cannot readily embrace, some points of doctrine in which the Lord has been pleased to enlighten me; that is, I (supposing my knowledge to be real and experimental) have received five talents, and they have as yet obtained but two: must I for this estrange myself from them? Rather let me be careful, lest they be found more faithful and exemplary in the improvement of two talents than I am in the management of five. Again, why should some of those who know, or might know, that my hope, my way, my end, and my enemies are the same with theirs, stand aloof from me, and treat me with coldness and suspicion because I am called a Calvinist? I was not born a Calvinist, and possibly they may not die as they are. However that may be, if our hearts are fixed upon the same Jesus, we shall be perfectly of one mind ere long: why should we not encourage and strengthen one another now? O that the arm of the Lord might be revealed, to revive that candour which the apostle so strongly enforces both by precept and example! Then the strong would bear the infirmities of the weak, and believers would receive each other without doubtful disputation.

Once more, however sound and orthodox (as the phrase is) professors may be in their principles, though true candour will make tender allowances for the frailty of nature and the power of temptation, yet neither candour nor charity will require us to accept them as real believers, unless the general strain and tenor of their deportment be as becometh the gospel of Christ. It is to be lamented that too many judge rather by the notions which people express than by the fruits which they produce, and, as they judge of others, so they often judge of themselves. We cannot have opportunity to say all we could wish, and to all to whom we would wish to say it, upon this subject, in private life; therefore it is the wisdom and duty of those who preach and of those who print, to drop a word of caution in the way of their hearers and readers, that they may not mistake notion for life, nor a form of godliness for the power. The grace of God is an operative principle, and, where it really has place in the heart, the effects will be seen (Acts xi. 23.); effects so uniform and extensive that the apostle James makes one single branch of conduct, and that such a one as is not usually thought the most important, a sufficient test of our state before God, for he affirms universally, that if any man seem to be religious, and "bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain;" and again he assures us, that "whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God:" and to the same purpose, Paul expresses himself on the subject of love (that love which he describes so accurately that none can mistake it unless they willingly deceive themselves): he declares that, without this love, the brightest knowledge, the warmest zeal, and the most splendid gifts, are nothing worth. It is to be feared these decisions will bear hard upon many who have a name to live among the churches of Christ. They are hearers and approvers of the gospel, and express a regard for those who preach it: they will stickle and fight for the doctrines, and know not how to bear those who fall a hair's breadth short of their standard, and yet there is so much levity or pride, censoriousness or worldliness, discoverable in their general behaviour, that their characters appear very dubious; and, though we are bound to wish them well, candour will not oblige or warrant us to judge favourably of such conduct, for the unerring word of God is the standard to which our judgments are to be referred and conformed.

In the sense, and under the limitations which I have expressed, we ought to cultivate a candid spirit, and learn from the experience of our own weakness to be gentle and tender to others, avoiding, at the same time, that indifference and cowardice which, under the name of candour, countenances error, extenuates sin, and derogates from the authority of scripture.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIII.

(1.) ON MAN IN HIS FALLEN ESTATE.

"Lord, what is Man!"

DEAR SIR,

We hear much in the present day of the dignity of human nature, and it is allowed that man was an excellent creature as he came out of the hands of God; but, if we consider this question with a view to fallen man as depraved by sin, how can we but join with the psalmist in wonder that the great God should make any account of him.

Fallen as man is from his original state of happiness and holiness, his natural faculties and abilities afford sufficient evidence that the hand which made him is divine. He is capable of great things: his understanding, will, affections, imagination, and memory are noble and amazing powers. But view him in a moral light, as an intelligent being, incessantly dependent upon God, accountable to him, and appointed by him to a state of existence in an unchangeable world. Considered in this relation, man is a monster, a vile, base, stupid, obstinate, and mischievous creature: no words can fully describe him. Man, with all his boasted understanding and attainments is a fool. So long as he is destitute of the saving grace of God, his conduct, as to his most important concernments, is more absurd and inconsistent than that of the meanest idiot; with respect to his affections and pursuits, he is degraded far below the beasts; and, for the malignity and wickedness of his will, can be compared to nothing so properly as the devil.

The question here is not concerning this or that man, a Nero or a Heliogabulus, but concerning human nature, the whole race of mankind, the few excepted who are born of God. There is indeed a difference among men, but it is owing to the restraints of divine providence, without which earth would be the very image of hell. A wolf or a lion, while chained, cannot do so much mischief as if they were loose, but the nature is the same in the whole species. Education and interest, fear and shame, human laws and the secret power of God over the mind, combine to form many characters that are externally decent and respectable, and even the most abandoned are under a restraint which prevents them from manifesting a thousandth part of the wickedness which is in their hearts; but the heart itself is universally deceitful and desperately wicked.

Man is a fool.—He can, indeed, measure the earth, and almost count the stars: he abounds in arts and inventions, in science and policy; and shall he then be called a fool? The ancient heathens, the inhabitants of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, were eminent for this kind of wisdom. They are to this day studied as models by those who aim to excel in history, poetry, painting, architecture, and other exertions of human genius, which are suited to polish the manners without improving the heart; but their most admired philosophers, legislators, logicians, orators, and artists, were as destitute, as infants or idiots, of that knowledge which alone deserves the name of true wisdom. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Ignorant and regardless of God, yet conscious of their weakness and of their dependence upon a power above their own, and stimulated by an inward principle of fear, of which they knew neither the origin nor right application, they worshipped the creature instead of the Creator; yea, placed their trust in stocks and stones, in the work of men's hands, in nonentities and chimeras. An acquaintance with their mythology, or system of religious fables, passes with us for a considerable branch of learning, because it is drawn from ancient books written in languages not known to the vulgar; but, in point of certainty or truth, we might receive as much satisfaction from a collection of dreams, or from the ravings of lunatics. If, therefore, we admit these admired sages as a tolerable specimen of mankind, must we not confess that man in his best estate, while uninstructed by the Spirit of God, is a fool? But are we wiser than they? Not in the least, till the grace of God makes us so. Our superior advantages only show our folly in a more striking light. Why do we account any persons foolish? A fool has no sound judgment: he is governed wholly by appearances, and would prefer a fine coat to the writings of a large estate: he pays no regard to consequences. Fools have sometimes hurt or killed their best friends, and thought that they did no harm. A fool cannot reason, therefore arguments are lost upon him. At one time, if tied with a straw, he dares not stir; at another time, perhaps, he can hardly be persuaded to move, though the house were on fire. Are these the characteristics of a fool? Then there is no fool like the sinner, who prefers the toys of earth to the happiness of heaven; who is held in bondage by the foolish customs of the world, and is more afraid of the breath of man than of the wrath of God.

Again, man in his natural state is a beast, yea, below the beasts that perish. In two things he strongly resembles them; in looking no higher than to sensual gratifications, and in that selfishness of spirit which prompts him to propose himself and his own interest as his proper and highest end. But in many respects he sinks sadly beneath them. Unnatural lusts, and the want of natural affection towards their offspring, are abominations not to be found among the brute creation. What shall we say of mothers destroying their children

with their own hands, or of the horrid act of self-murder! Men are worse than beasts, likewise, in their obstinacy; they will not be warned. If a beast escapes from a trap, he will be cautious how he goes near it again, and in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird: but man, though he be often reproved, hardens his neck; he rushes upon his ruin with his eyes open, and can defy God to his face, and dare damnation.

Once more, let us observe how man resembles the devil. There are spiritual sins, and from these in their height the scriptures teach us to judge of Satan's character. Every feature in this description is strong in man; so that what our Lord said to the Jews is of general application, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father that you will do." Man resembles Satan in pride. This stupid, wicked creature values himself upon his wisdom, power, and virtue, and will talk of being saved by his good works; though, if he can, Satan himself need not despair. He resembles him in malice; and this diabolical disposition often proceeds to murder, and would daily, if the Lord did not restrain it. He derives from Satan the hateful spirit of envy: he is often tormented beyond expression, by beholding the prosperity of his neighbours; and proportionably pleased with their calamities, though he gains no other advantage from them than the gratification of this rancorous principle. He bears the image likewise of Satan in his cruelty. This evil is bound up in the heart even of a child. A disposition to take pleasure in giving pain to others appears very early. Children, if left to themselves, soon feel a gratification in torturing insects and animals. What misery does the wanton cruelty of men inflict upon cocks, dogs, bulls, bears, and other creatures, which, they seem to think, were formed for no other end than to feast their savage spirits with their torments! If we form our judgment of men, when they seem most pleased, and have neither anger nor resentment to plead in their excuse, it is too evident, even from the nature of their amusements, whose they are, and whom they serve; and they are the worst of enemies to each other. Think of the horrors of war, the rage of duellists, of the murders and assassinations with which the world is filled, and then say, "Lord, what is man!" Farther, if deceit and treachery belong to Satan's character, then surely man resembles him. Is not the universal observation, and complaint of all ages, an affecting comment upon the prophet's words, "Trust ye not in a friend, put not confidence in a guide, keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom, for they hunt every man his brother with a net!" How many have at this moment cause to say with David, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords!" Again, like Satan, men are eager in tempting others to sin. Not content to damn themselves, they employ all their arts and influence to draw as many as they can with them into the same destruction. Lastly, in direct opposition to God and goodness, in contemptuous enmity to the gospel of his grace, and a bitter persecuting spirit against those who profess it, Satan himself can hardly exceed them. Herein, indeed, they are his agents and willing servants; and because the blessed God is himself out of their reach, they labour to shew their despite to him in the persons of his people.

I have drawn but a sketch, a few outlines, of the picture of fallen man. To give an exact copy of him, to charge every feature with its full aggravation of horror, and to paint him as he is, would be impossible. Enough has been observed to illustrate the propriety of the exclamation, "Lord, what is man!" Perhaps some of my readers may attempt to deny or extenuate the charge, and may plead, that I have not been describing mankind, but some of the most abandoned of the species, who hardly deserve the name of men. But I have already provided against this exception. It is human nature I describe; and the vilest and most profligate individuals cannot sin beyond the powers and limits of that nature which they possess in common with the more mild and moderate. Though there may be a difference in the fruitfulness of trees, yet the production of one apple decides the nature of the tree upon which it grew, as certainly as if it had produced a thousand; so in the present case, should it be allowed that these enormities cannot be found in all persons, it would be a sufficient confirmation of what I have advanced, if they can be found in any; unless it could be likewise proved, that those who appeared more wicked than others were of a different species from the rest. But I need not make this concession; they must be insensible indeed, who do not feel something within them so very contrary to our common notions of goodness, as would perhaps make them rather submit to be banished from human society, than to be compelled *bona fide* to disclose to their fellow-creatures every thought and desire which arises in their hearts.

Many useful reflections may be drawn from this unpleasing subject. We cannot at present conceive how much we owe to the guardian care of divine providence, that any of us are preserved in peace and safety for a single day, in such a world as this. Live where we will, we have those near us, who, both by nature, and by the power which Satan has over them, are capable of the most atrocious crimes. But he whom they know not, restrains them, so that they cannot do the things

that they would. When he suspends the restraint, they act immediately; then we hear of murders rapes, and outrages. But did not the Lord reign with a strong hand, such evils would be perpetrated every hour, and no one would be safe in the house or in the field. His ordinance of civil government is one great means of preserving the peace of society; but this is in many cases inadequate. The heart of man, when fully bent upon evil, will not be intimidated or stopt by gibbets or racks.

How wonderful is the love of God in giving his Son to die for such wretches! And how strong and absolute is the necessity of a new birth if we would be happy! Can beasts and devils inherit the kindom of God! The due consideration of this subject is likewise needful, to preserve believers in an humble, thankful, watchful frame of spirit. Such we once were, and such, with respect to the natural principle remaining in us, which the apostle calls the flesh, or the old man, we still are. The propensities of fallen nature are not eradicated in the children of God, though by grace, they are made partakers of a new principle, which enables them, in the Lord's strength, to resist and mortify the body of sin, so that it cannot reign in them. Yet they are liable to sad surprisals; and the histories of Aaron, David, Solomon, and Peter, are left on record, to teach us what evil is lacent in the hearts of the best men, and what they are capable of doing, if left but a little to themselves. "Lord, what is man!"

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIV.

(2.) ON MAN IN HIS FALLEN ESTATE.

"Lord, what is man!"

DEAR SIR,

THE nature of fallen man agrees to the description the apostle has given us of his boasted wisdom: it is earthly, sensual, devilish. I have attempted some general delineation of it in the preceding letter; but the height of its malignity cannot be properly estimated, unless we consider its actings with respect to the light of the gospel. The Jews were extremely wicked at the time of our Lord's appearance upon earth; yet he said of them, "If I had not come and spoken to you, ye had not had sin;" that is, as the light and power of his ministry deprived them of all excuse for continuing in sin, so it proved the occasion of shewing their wickedness in the most aggravated manner; and all their other sins were but faint proofs of the true state of their hearts, if compared with the discovery they made of themselves, by their pertinacious opposition to him. In this sense, what the apostle has observed of the law of Moses, may be applied to the gospel of Christ: it entered, that sin might abound. If we would estimate the utmost exertions of human depravity, and the strongest effects it is capable of producing, we must select our instances from the conduct of those to whom the gospel is known. The Indians, who roast their enemies alive, give sufficient proof that man is barbarous to his own kind; which may likewise be easily demonstrated without going so far from home; but the preaching of the gospel discovers the enmity of the heart against God, in ways and degrees, of which unenlightened savages and heathens are not capable.

By the gospel, I now mean, not merely the doctrine of salvation, as it lies in the holy scriptures, but that public and authoritative dispensation of this doctrine which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to his true ministers, who, having been themselves, by the power of his grace, brought out of darkness into marvellous light, are, by his Holy Spirit, qualified and sent forth to declare to their fellow-sinners, what they have seen, and felt, and tasted, of the word of life. Their commission is, to exalt the Lord alone, to stain the pride of all human glory. They are to set forth the evil and demerit of sin, the strictness, spirituality, and sanction of the law of God, the total apostacy of mankind; and from these premises to demonstrate the utter impossibility of a sinner's escaping condemnation by any works or endeavours of his own; and then to proclaim a full and free salvation from sin and wrath, by faith in the name, blood, obedience, and mediation of God manifest in the flesh; together with a denunciation of eternal misery to all who shall finally reject the testimony which God has given of his Son. Though these several branches of the will of God respecting sinners, and other truths in connection with them, are plainly revealed, and repeatedly inculcated in the Bible, and though the Bible is to be found in almost every house, yet we see, in fact, it is as a sealed book, little read, little understood, and, therefore, but little regarded, except in those places which the Lord is pleased to favour with ministers who can confirm them from their own experience, and who, by a sense of his constraining love, and the worth of souls, are animated to make the faithful discharge of their ministry the one great business of their lives; who aim not to possess the wealth, but to promote the welfare, of their hearers; are equally regardless of the frowns or smiles of the world, and count not their lives dear, so that they may be wise and successful in winning souls to Christ.

When the gospel, in this sense of the word, first comes to a place, though the people are going on in sin, they may be said to sin ignorantly; they have not yet been warned of their

danger. Some are drinking down iniquity like water; others more soberly burying themselves alive in the cares and business of the world; others find a little time for what they call religious duties, which they persevere in, though they are utter strangers to the nature or the pleasure of spiritual worship; partly, as thereby they think to bargain with God, and to make amends for such sins as they do not choose to relinquish; and partly because it gratifies their pride, and affords them (as they think) some ground for saying, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men." The preached gospel declares the vanity and danger of these several ways which sinners chuse to walk in. It declares and demonstrates, that, different as they appear from each other, they are equally remote from the path of safety and peace, and all tend to the same point, the destruction of those who persist in them. At the same time, it provides against that despair into which men would be otherwise plunged, when convinced of their sins, by revealing the immense love of God, the glory and grace of Christ, and inviting all to come to him, that they may obtain pardon, life, and happiness. In a word, it shews the pit of hell under men's feet, and opens the gate, and points out the way to heaven. Let us now briefly observe the effects it produces in those who do not receive it as the power of God unto salvation. These effects are various, as tempers and circumstances vary; but they may all lead us to adopt the psalmist's exclamation, "Lord, what is man!"

Many who have heard the gospel once or a few times, will hear it no more; it awakens their scorn, their hatred, and rage. They pour contempt upon the wisdom of God, despise his goodness, defy his power; and their very *looks* express the spirit of the rebellious Jews, who told the prophet Jeremiah to his face, "As to the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee at all." The ministers who preach it are accounted men that turn the world upside down; and the people who receive it, fools or hypocrites. The word of the Lord is a burden to them, and they hate it with a perfect hatred. How strongly is the disposition of the natural heart manifested, by the confusion which often takes place in families, where the Lord is pleased to awaken one or two in a house, while the rest remain in their sins! To profess, or even to be suspected of an attachment to the gospel of Christ, is frequently considered and treated as the worst of crimes, sufficient to cancel the strongest obligations of relation or friendship. Parents, upon such a provocation, will hate their children, and children ridicule their parents. Many find, agreeably to our Lord's declaration, that from the time a sense of his love engaged their hearts to love him again, their worst foes have been those of their own household; and that they who expressed the greatest love and tenderness for them before their conversion, can now hardly bear to see them.

The bulk of a people will perhaps continue to hear, at least now and then; and to those who do, the Spirit of God usually, at one time or other, bears testimony to the truth. Their consciences are struck, and for a season they believe and tremble. But what is the consequence? No man who has taken poison seeks more earnestly or speedily for an antidote, than those do for something to stifle and smother their convictions. They run to company, to drink, to any thing, for relief against the unwelcome intrusion of serious thoughts; and when they succeed, and recover their former indifference, they rejoice, as if they had escaped some great danger. The next step is, to ridicule their own convictions; and next to that, if they see any of their acquaintance under the like impressions, to use every art, and strain every nerve, that they may render them as obstinate as themselves. For this purpose, they watch as a fowler for the bird, flatter or revile, tempt or threaten; and if they can prevail, and are the occasion of hardening any in their sins, they rejoice and triumph, as if they accounted it their interest and their glory to ruin the souls of their fellow-creatures.

By frequent hearing, they receive more light. They are compelled to know, whether they will or not, that the wrath of God hangs over the children of disobedience. They carry a sting in their consciences, and at times feel themselves most miserable, and cannot but wish they had never been born, or that they had been dogs or toads, rather than rational creatures. Yet they harden themselves still more. They affect to be happy and at ease, and force themselves to wear a smile, when anguish preys upon their hearts. They blaspheme the way of truth, watch for the faults of professors, and, with a malicious joy, publish and aggravate them. They see, perhaps, how the wicked die, but are not alarmed; they see the righteous die, but are not moved. Neither providences nor ordinances, mercies nor judgments, can stop them; for they are determined to go on, and perish with their eyes open, rather than submit to the gospel.

But they do not always openly reject the gospel-truths. Some who profess to approve and receive them, do thereby discover the evils of the heart of man if possible in a yet stronger light. They make Christ the minister of sin, and turn his grace into licentiousness. Like Judas, they say, Hail Master! and betray him. This is the highest pitch of iniquity. They pervert all the doctrines of the gospel. From election they draw an excuse for continuing in their evil ways; and contend for salvation without works, because they love not obedience. They extol the right-

eousness of Christ, but hold it in opposition to personal holiness. In a word, because they hear that God is good, they determine to persist in evil. "Lord, what is man!"

Thus wilful and impenitent sinners go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. The word which they despise, becomes to them a savour of death unto death. They take different courses, but all are travelling down to the pit; and, unless sovereign mercy interpose, will soon sink to rise no more. The final event is usually twofold. Many, after they have been more or less shaken by the word, settle in formality. If hearing would supply the place of faith, love, and obedience, they would do well; but by degrees they become sermon-proof. The truths which once struck them, lose their power by being often heard; and thus multitudes live and die in darkness, though the light has long shone around them. Others are more openly given up to a reprobate mind. Contempt of the gospel makes infidels, deists, and atheists. They are filled with a spirit of delusion to believe a lie. These are scoffers, walking after their own lusts; for where the principles of religion are given up, the conduct will be vile and abominable. Such persons sport themselves with their own deceivings, and strongly prove the truth of the gospel, while they dispute against it. We often find that people of this cast have formerly been the subjects of strong convictions; but when the evil spirit has seemed to depart for a season, and returns again, the last state of that person is worse than the first.

It is not improbable that some of my readers may meet with their own characters under one or other of the views I have given of the desperate wickedness of the heart, in its actings against the truth. May the Spirit of God constrain them to read with attention. Your case is dangerous, but I would hope not utterly desperate. Jesus is mighty to save. His grace can pardon the most aggravated offences, and subdue the most inveterate habits of sin. The gospel you have hitherto slighted, resisted, or opposed, is still the power of God unto salvation. The blood of Jesus, upon which you have hitherto trampled, speaks better things than the blood of Abel, and is of virtue to cleanse those whose sins are scarlet and crimson, and to make them white as snow. As yet you are spared; but it is high time to stop, to throw down your arms of rebellion, and humble yourselves at his feet. If you do, you may yet escape; but if not, know assuredly that wrath is coming upon you to the uttermost: and you will shortly find, to your unspeakable dismay, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXV.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT,—THINK ON THESE THINGS. Phil. iv. 8.

DEAR SIR,

THE precept which I have chosen for my motto is applicable to many particulars, which are but seldom and occasionally mentioned from the pulpit. There are improprieties of conduct, which, though usually considered as foibles that hardly deserve a severe censure, are properly sinful; for though some of them may not seem to violate any express command of scripture, yet they are contrary to that accuracy and circumspection which become our profession. A christian, by the tenor of his high calling, is bound to avoid even the appearance of evil; and his deportment should not only be upright as to his leading principles, but amiable and engaging, and as free as possible from every inconsistence and blemish. The characters of some valuable persons are clouded; and the influence they might otherwise have, greatly counteracted by comparatively small faults; yet faults they certainly are; and it would be well if they could be made so sensible of them, and of their ill effects, as that they might earnestly watch, and strive, and pray against them. I know not how to explain myself better than by attempting the outlines of a few portraits, to each of which I apprehend some strong resemblances may be found in real life. I do not wish to set my readers to work to find out such resemblances among their neighbours; but would advise them to examine carefully, whether they cannot, in one or other of them, discover some traces of their own features. And though I speak of men only, counterparts to the several characters, may, doubtless, be found here and there among the women: for the imperfections and evils of a fallen nature are equally entailed upon both sexes.

AUSTERUS is a solid and exemplary christian. He has a deep, extensive, and experimental knowledge of divine things. Inflexibly and invariably true to his principles, he stems with a noble singularity the torrent of the world, and can neither be bribed nor intimidated from the path of duty. He is a rough diamond of great intrinsic value, and would sparkle, with a distinguished lustre, if he were more polished. But though the word of God is his daily study, and he prizes the precepts, as well as the promises, more than thousands of gold and silver, there is one precept he seems to have overlooked: I mean that of the apostle, *be courteous*. Instead of that gentleness and condescension which will always be expected from a professed fol-

lower of the meek and lowly Jesus; there is a harshness in his manner, which makes him more admired than beloved; and they who truly love him, often feel more constraint than pleasure when in his company. His intimate friends are satisfied that he is no stranger to true humility of heart: but these are few. By others he is thought proud, dogmatic, and self-important; nor can this prejudice against him be easily removed, until he can lay aside that cynical air which he has unhappily contracted.

HUMANUS is generous and benevolent. His feelings are lively, and his expressions of them strong. No one is more distant from sordid views, or less influenced by a selfish spirit. His heart burns with love to Jesus, and he is ready to receive, with open arms, all who love his Saviour. Yet, with an upright and friendly spirit, which entitles him to the love and esteem of all who know him, he has not every thing we would wish in a friend. In some respects, though not in the most criminal sense, he bridleth not his tongue. Should you, without witness or writing, intrust him with untold gold, you would run no risk of loss; but if you intrust him with a secret, you thereby put it in the possession of the public. Not that he would wilfully betray you, but it is his infirmity. He knows not how to keep a secret; it escapes from him before he is aware. So, likewise, as to matters of fact: in things which are of great importance, and where he is sufficiently informed, no man has a stricter regard to truth; but in the smaller concerns of common life, whether it be from credulity, or from a strange and blameable inadvertency, he frequently grieves and surprises those who know his real character, by saying the thing that is not. Thus they to whom he opens his very heart, dare not make him returns of equal confidence; and they who, in some cases, would venture their lives upon his word, in others are afraid of telling a story after him. How lamentable are such blemishes in such a person!

PRUDENS, though not of a generous natural temper, is a partaker of that grace which opens the heart, and inspires a disposition to love and to good works. He bestows not his alms to be seen of men; but they who have the best opportunities of knowing what he does for the relief of others, and of comparing it with his ability, can acquit him in good measure of the charge which another part of his conduct exposes him to. For Prudens is a great economist; and though he would not willingly wrong or injure any person, yet the meanness to which he will submit, either to save or gain a penny, in what he accounts an honest way, are a great discredit to his profession. He is punctual in fulfilling his engagements; but exceedingly hard, strict, and suspicious in making his bargains. And in his dress, and every article of his personal concerns, he is content to be so much below the station in which the providence of God has placed him, that to those who are not acquainted with his private benefactions to the poor, he appears under the hateful character of a miser, and to be governed by that love of money which the scriptures declare to be the root of all evil, and inconsistent with the true love of God and of the saints.

VOLATILIS is sufficiently exact in performing his promises in such instances as he thinks of real importance. If he bids a person depend upon his assistance he will not disappoint his expectations. Perhaps he is equally sincere in all his promises at the time of making them; but for want of method in the management of his affairs, he is always in a hurry, always too late, and has always some engagement upon his hands with which it is impossible he can comply. Yet he goes on in this way, exposing himself and others to continual disappointments. He accepts, without a thought, proposals which are incompatible with each other, and will perhaps undertake to be at two or three different and distant places at the same hour. This has been so long his practice that nobody now expects him till they see him. In other respects he is a good sort of man; but this want of punctuality, which runs through his whole deportment, puts every thing out of course in which he is concerned, abroad and at home. Volatilis excuses himself as well as he can, and chiefly by alledging, that the things in which he fails are of no great consequence. But he would do well to remember, that truth is a sacred thing, and ought not to be violated in the smallest matters, without an unforeseen and unavoidable prevention. Such a trifling turn of spirit lessens the weight of a person's character, though he makes no pretensions to religion, and is still a greater blemish in a professor.

CESSATOR is not chargeable with being buried in the cares and business of the present life, to the neglect of the one thing needful; but he greatly neglects the duties of his station. Had he been sent into the world only to read, pray, hear sermons, and join in religious conversation, he might pass for an eminent christian. But though it is to be hoped, that his abounding in these exercises springs from a heart-attachment to divine things, his conduct evidences that his judgment is weak, and his views of his christian calling are very narrow and defective. He does not consider that waiting upon God in the public and private ordinances, is designed, not to excuse us from a discharge of the duties of civil life, but to instruct, strengthen, and qualify us for their performance. His affairs are in disorder, and his family and connections are likely to suffer by his indolence. He thanks God that he is not worldly-minded; but he is an idle and unfaithful member of society, and causes the way of truth to be evil spoken of.

Of such the apostle has determined, that "if any man will not work, neither should he eat."

CURIOSUS is upright and unblameable in his general deportment, and no stranger to the experiences of a true christian. His conversation upon these subjects is often satisfactory and edifying. He would be a much more agreeable companion, were it not for an impertinent desire of knowing every body's business, and the grounds of every hint that is occasionally dropped in discourse where he is present. This puts him upon asking a multiplicity of needless and improper questions, and obliges those who know him, to be continually upon their guard, and to treat him with reserve. He catechises even strangers, and is unwilling to part with them till he is punctually informed of all their connections, employments, and designs. For this idle curiosity he is marked and avoided as a busybody; and they who have the best opinion of him cannot but wonder, that a man, who appears to have so many better things to employ his thoughts, should find leisure to amuse himself with what does not at all concern him. Were it not for the rules of civility he would be affronted every day: and if he would attend to the cold and evasive answers he receives to his inquiries, or even to the looks with which they are accompanied, he might learn, that, though he means no harm, he appears to a great disadvantage, and that this prying disposition is very unpleasing.

QUERULUS wastes much of his precious time in declaiming against the management of public affairs; though he has neither access to the springs which move the wheels of government, nor influence either to accelerate or retard their motions. Our national concerns are no more affected by the remonstrances of Querulus, than the heavenly bodies are by the disputes of astronomers. While the newspapers are the chief sources of his intelligence, and his situation precludes him from being a competent judge, either of matters of fact, or matters of right, why should Querulus trouble himself with politics? This would be a weakness, if we consider him only as a member of society; but if we consider him as a christian, it is worse than weakness; it is a sinful conformity to the men of the world, who look no farther than to second causes, and forget that the Lord reigns. If a christian be placed in a public sphere of action, he should undoubtedly be faithful to his calling, and endeavour, by all lawful methods, to transmit our privileges to posterity; but it would be better for Querulus to let the dead bury their dead. There are people enough to make a noise about political matters, who know not how to employ their time to better purpose. Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world; and most of his people may do their country much more essential service by pleading for it in prayer, than by finding fault with things which they have no power to alter. If Querulus had opportunity of spending a few months under some of the governments upon the continent, I may indeed say, under any of them, he would probably bring home with him a more grateful sense of the Lord's goodness to him, in appointing his lot in Britain. As it is, his zeal is not only unprofitable to others, but hurtful to himself. It embitters his spirit, it diverts his thoughts from things of greater importance, and prevents him from feeling the value of those blessings, civil and religious, which he actually possesses; and could he, as he wishes, prevail on many to act in the same spirit, the governing powers might be irritated to take every opportunity of abridging that religious liberty which we are favoured with, above all the nations upon earth. Let me remind Querulus, that the hour is approaching, when many things, which at present too much engross his thoughts and inflame his passions, will appear as foreign to him, as what is now transacting among the Tartars or Chinese.

Other improprieties of conduct, which lessen the influence and spot the profession of some who wish well to the cause of Christ, might be enumerated, but these may suffice for a specimen.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO A GAY FRIEND, ON HIS RECOVERY FROM ILLNESS.

DEAR SIR,

I SUPPOSE you will receive many congratulations on your recovery from your late dangerous illness; most of them, perhaps, more sprightly and better turned, but none, I persuade myself, more sincere and affectionate than mine. I beg you would prepare yourself by this good opinion of me, before you read further; and let the reality of my regard excuse what you may dislike in my manner of expressing it.

When a person is returned from a doubtful, distant voyage, we are naturally led to inquire into the incidents he has met with, and the discoveries he has made. Indulge me in a curiosity of this kind, especially as my affection gives me an interest and concern in the event. You have been, my friend, upon the brink, the very edge of an eternal state; but God has restored you back to the world again. Did you meet with, or have you brought back, nothing new? Did nothing occur to stop or turn your usual train of thought? Were your apprehensions of invisible things exactly the same in the height of

your disorder, when you were cut off from the world and all its engagements, as when you were in perfect health, and in the highest enjoyment of your own inclinations? If you answer me, "Yes, all things are just the same as formerly, the difference between sickness and health only excepted;" I am at a loss how to reply. I can only sigh and wonder: sigh, that it should be thus with any, that it should be thus with you, whom I dearly love; and wonder, since this unhappy case, strange as it seems in one view, is yet so frequent, why it was not always thus with myself; for long and often it was just so. Many a time, when sickness had brought me, as we say, to death's door, I was as easy and insensible as the sailor, who, in the height of a storm, should presume to sleep upon the top of the mast, quite regardless, that the next tossing wave might plunge him into the raging ocean, beyond all possibility of relief. But at length a day came, which, though the most terrible day I ever saw, I can now look back upon with thankfulness and pleasure; I say, the time came, when, in such a helpless extremity, and under the expectation of immediate death, it pleased God to command the vail from my eyes, and I saw things in some measure as they really were. Imagine with yourself, a person trembling upon the point of a dreadful precipice, a powerful and inexorable enemy eager to push him down, and an assemblage of all that is horrible waiting at the bottom for his fall; even this will give you but a faint representation of the state of my mind at that time. Believe me, it was not a whim, or a dream, which changed my sentiments and conduct, but a powerful conviction, which will not admit the least doubt; an evidence which, like that I have of my own existence, I cannot call in question, without contradicting all my senses. And though my case was in some respects uncommon, yet something like it is known by one and another every day; and I have myself conversed with many, who, after a course of years spent in defending deistical principles, or indulging libertine practices, when they have thought themselves confirmed in their schemes by the cool assent of what they then deemed impartial reason, have been, like me, brought to glory in the cross of Christ, and to live by that faith which they had before slighted and opposed. By these instances, I know that nothing is too hard for the Almighty. The same power which humbled [illegible] can undoubtedly bring down the most mighty infidel upon earth. And as I likewise knew, that, to shew his power, he is often pleased to make use of weak instruments, I am encouraged, notwithstanding apparent difficulty of succeeding, to warn you, over whom friendship or affection gives any influence, of the evil and the danger of a course of life formed upon the prevailing maxims of the world. So far as I neglect this, I am unfaithful in my professions, both to God and man.

I shall not at present trouble you in an argumentative way. If by dint of reasoning I could effect some change in your notions, my arguments, unless applied by a superior power, would still leave your heart unchanged and untouched. A man may give his assent to the gospel, and be able to defend it against others, and yet not have his own spirit truly influenced by it. This thought I shall leave with you, that if your scheme be not true to a demonstration, it must necessarily be false; for the issue is too important to make a doubt on the dangerous side tolerable. If the christian could possibly be mistaken, he is still upon equal terms with those who pronounce him to be so: but if the deist be wrong (that is, if we are in the right), the consequence to him must be unavoidable and intolerable. This, you will say, is a trite argument: I own it; but, beaten as it is, it will never be worn out or answered.

Permit me to remind you that the points in debate between us are already settled in themselves, and that our talking cannot alter or affect the nature of things, for they will be as they are, whatever apprehensions we may form of them; and remember, likewise, that we must all, each one for himself, experience on which side the truth lies. I used a wrong word when I spoke of your *recovery*: my dear friend, look upon it only as a *reprieve*, for you carry the sentence of death about with you still, and, unless you should be cut off (which God of his mercy forbid!) by a sudden stroke, you will as surely lie upon a deathbed as you have been now raised from a bed of sickness; and remember likewise (how can I bear to write it!) that should you neglect my admonitions, they will, notwithstanding, have an effect upon you, though not such an effect as I could wish; they will render you more inexcusable. I have delivered my own soul by faithfully warning you: but if you will not examine the matter with that seriousness it calls for; if you will not look up to God, the former of your body and the preserver of your spirit, for direction and assistance how to please him; if you will have your reading and conversation only on one side of the question; if you determine to let afflictions and dangers, mercies and deliverances, all pass without reflection and improvement; if you will spend your life as though you thought you were sent into the world only to eat, sleep, and play, and, after a course of years, be extinguished like the snuff of a candle;—why, then, you must abide the consequences. But assuredly, sooner or later, God will meet you. My hearty daily prayer is, that it may be in a way of mercy, and that you may be added to the number of the trophies of his invincible grace.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVII.

SOME POINTS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE CONSIDERED.

TO A FRIEND.

DEAR SIR,

I TRUST the difference of our sentiments, since we are agreed in the one thing needful, will no more interrupt our union and fellowship than the difference of our features or the tone of our voices. I wish you to believe that I would be no advocate for carelessness or formality. I hope my conscience bears me witness that, besides trusting in the letter of scripture, I likewise desire an increase of that inward and comfortable sense of divine things, in which I believe you are happy; and that I wish not only to be a subject of the kingdom of Jesus, but likewise to have that kingdom powerfully set up in my heart, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Indeed I see not how these can be distinguished, or what ground I could have to think myself a subject of his kingdom, unless I earnestly desired to have that kingdom in all its branches and blessings flourishing in my soul. I do not know that I live in the neglect of any means appointed of God for my growth in these blessings, or willingly allow myself in what is inconsistent with them: I think my heart is habitually in the pursuit of them, and that there is seldom an hour in any day when lively communion with my God, in Christ, is not present to my view as the chief good. To this purpose, through grace, I can venture to express myself to man, though still it is true, when I come before the Lord, notwithstanding the diligence and circumspection I would aim at, I see myself a poor inconsistent creature, that my strength is perfect weakness, and all I have is sin. I confess I am afraid of fixing the criterion of a work of grace too high, lest the mourners in Zion should be discouraged; because I find it is the will of God that such should not be discouraged, but comforted, and because it appears to me that the scriptural marks have respect rather to desires, if real, than to attainments, or at least to those attainments which are often possessed by persons who are kept very short of sensible comforts, Math. v. 3—9, Luke xviii. 12. 13, 1 Pet. ii. 7.

The points between you and me seem chiefly the following: 1. When may a person be properly denominated a believer? 2. What are the proper evidences and necessary concomitants of a lively, thriving frame of spirit? 3. Whether such a degree of faithfulness to light received as is consistent with the remnant of a depraved nature in our present state will certainly and always preserve our souls from declensions and winter-seasons? 4. Whether that gracious humility which arises from a due sense of our own vileness and of the riches of divine grace be ordinarily attainable without some mortifying experience of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our own hearts? A few lines upon each of these particulars will, I think, take in the chief parts of your letter.

1. We differ something with respect to what constitutes a believer. I own nothing has surprised me more, in the course of our friendly debate, than your supposing that a person should date his conversion and his commencing a believer from the time of his receiving the gospel-truths with that clearness and power as to produce in him an abiding assurance. The apostle, in Eph. i. 13, makes a plain distinction between believing and being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. By the experience and observation of many years, I have been more and more persuaded, that to represent assurance as being of the essence of faith, is not agreeable to scripture, which, in many places, either expressly asserts or strongly intimates the contrary, John i. 50, and xx. 29, Rom. x. 9, 1 John v. 1 Whoever is not a believer must be an unbeliever; there can be no medium. Either there are many believers who have not assurance, or else there are many unbelievers who love the Lord Jesus, hate sin, are poor in spirit, and adorn the doctrine of the gospel by their temper and conversation; and I doubt not but those who now have assurance, had, before they attained it, a something which wrought by love, and overcame the world. I know no principle capable of these effects but faith, which, though at first it be like a grain of mustard-seed, is the seed of God: though it be faint, it is genuine, as the dawning of light is of the same nature with that which flows from the noon-day sun. I allow that, while faith is weak, there may be little solid comfort, if by that expression abiding comfort be meant. Faith gives safety and spiritual life; abiding peace and establishment follow the sealing of the Spirit. But though an infant has not the strength, activity, and understanding, which he will attain when he arrives to the age of manhood, he is as fully possessed of a principle of life while he is an infant as at any time afterwards.

2. We seem to differ likewise as to the marks of a lively, thriving spirit; at least if any are supposed to be better or surer than those to which our Lord has promised blessedness, Matth. v. 3—9. He has said, "Blessed are they that mourn;" but he has not said, More blessed are they that are comforted. They are, to be sure, more happy at present; but their blessedness consists not in their present comforts, but in those perceptions of gospel-truths which form them to that contrite spirit in which God delighteth, Is. lvii. 18.

and which make them capable of divine comforts, and spiritual hungering and thirsting after them. Perhaps we do not argue *ad idem*; we may mean different things. I would not represent myself as a stranger to peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In the midst of all my conflicts I have a heartfelt satisfaction from the gospel, which nothing else could give. But I mean, though this be with me as an abiding principle, it rarely affords me what I think you intend when you speak of sensible comforts. I cannot feel that warmth of heart, that glowing of love, which the knowledge of such a Saviour should inspire. I account it my sin, and I feel it my burden, that I cannot. And when I truly do this, when I can abhor myself for my stupidity, mourn over it, and humbly look up to the Lord for relief against it, I judge my soul to be at such times as much alive to God as it would be if he saw fit to increase my comfort. Let me always either rejoice in him or mourn after him: I would leave the alternative to him, who knows best how to suit his dispensations to my state; and I trust he knows that I do not say this because I set a small value upon his presence. As to the experience of the apostles, I believe they were patterns to all succeeding believers: but, with some regard to the several trials and services to which we may be called in this world, he distributes severally to all his people according to his own will, yet with a wise and gracious accommodation to the circumstances and situations of each. The apostle Paul connects the abounding of his consolations with the abounding of his afflictions, and with the state of the people to whom he preached, 2 Cor. i 4—7; and if, instead of preaching the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum in the face of persecution, he had lived in a land of liberty, and been confined to a parochial cure, for aught I know, his cup might not have run over so often. Succeeding ministers of the gospel, when called to very laborious and painful services, have, for the like reasons, been often favoured with a double portion of that joy which makes hard things easy and bitter things sweet; and, in general, all the Lord's people who walk humbly before him, may expect that in, or after seasons of great trial, and in proportion to their pressures, he will favour them with peculiar comforts. It is in this way he, in a great measure, fulfils his promise of making their strength equal to their day; and I am enabled to trust him in this matter, that if he should, at any time, see fit to call me to a more difficult and dangerous sphere of service, or lead me into the furnace of affliction, he would, if he saw it needful, support and refresh me by such manifestations of his glory and love, as I know but little of at present. In a word, an humble, dependent frame of spirit, perseverance in the use of appointed means, care to avoid all occasions of sin, an endeavour to glorify God in our callings, and an eye to Jesus as our all in all;—these things are to me sure indications that the soul is right, that the Lord is present, and that grace is thriving and in exercise, whether sensible consolations abound or not.

3. I propose the third question, concerning such a degree of faithfulness to light received, as is consistent with the remnants of a depraved nature, because I apprehend one effect of indwelling sin is, to render it morally impossible for us to be entirely faithful to that light and power which God has given us. It may sound like a contradiction, to say we cannot do what we can do; but there are many enigmas in a believer's experience, at least in mine; and I never expect to meet the man that knows his own heart, that will say he is always faithful, diligent, and obedient, to the full extent of his ability; I rather expect he would confess with me, that he feels a need of more ability, and fresh supplies of grace, to enable him to make a better improvement of what he had already received. If some, as you suppose, in their dullest frames can read the Bible, go to the throne of grace, and mourn (as they ought) over what is amiss, I must say for myself, I can, and I cannot. Without doubt I can take the Bible in my hand, and force myself to read it; I can kneel down, and I can see I ought to mourn; but to understand and attend to what I read, to engage my heart in prayer, or to be duly humbled under the sense of so dark and dissipated a state of mind; these things at some seasons, I can no more do than I can raise the dead, and yet I cannot plead positive inability; I am satisfied that what prevents me is my sin, but it is the sin of my nature, the sin that dwelleth in me: and I expect it will be thus with me at times, in a greater or less degree, till this body of sin shall be wholly destroyed. Yet I believe the Lord is with me, even when he seems to be absent, otherwise my corruptions, at such seasons, might easily prevail to betray me into open or allowed sin, which, blessed be the grace and care of my good Shepherd, is not the case. I know not if I rightly understand the expression, "We may humbly hope, that those things we fall into, which are not in our power to prevent, will not be set to our account." The least of the evils I feel, and which seem most involuntary, if set to my account, would ruin me; and I trust, that even my worst deviations shall not appear against me, because I am a believer in Jesus; and I know, and am sure, that I do not wish to continue in sin that grace may abound. My conscience bears me witness, that I would not desire the rule of duty to be narrowed or accommodated to my imperfections in a single instance. If the expression only means, that these unavoidable effects of our evil nature should not break our peace of con

science, or discourage us in our approaches to God, I am of the same mind; through mercy I have seldom any more doubt of my acceptance in the Beloved, when in a dark frame than when I am most favoured with liberty.

4. Whether true evangelical humility, and an enlarged view of the grace of God in Christ, triumphing over all obstacles, be ordinarily attainable without an experience of declensions, backslidings, and repeated forgiveness, is the last question I shall consider. I dare say you will do me the justice to believe, that I would not advise any one to run into sin in order to get a knowledge of his own heart. David broke his bones thereby: he obtained an affecting proof of his inability of standing in his own strength, and of the skill and goodness of his Physician who healed him; yet no man in his wits would break his bones for the sake of making experiments, if he were ever so sure they would be well set again. You think that a believer is never more humble in his own eyes, or admires Jesus more, than when he is filled with joy and peace. I readily allow, that the present impressions of divine love are humbling: however, the direct tendency of gracious consolations in themselves is one thing; what evils they may afterwards occasion through the desperate depravity of our hearts, is another. We have a memorable case in point to explain my meaning. The apostle Paul's recollection of his course while in a natural state, and the singular manner of his conversion, were evidently suited to make him an humble christian, and he was so. By an especial favour of the Lord, he was afterwards taken up into the third heaven; what he saw or heard there he has not told us, but surely he met with nothing that could have a tendency to make him proud; doubtless he saw Jesus in his glory, and the humble spiritual worship of heaven; a sight which we might deem sufficient to make him walk in self-abasement all the days of his life: but Paul, though an eminent saint, was still liable to the effects of indwelling sin; he was in danger of being exalted through the abundance of revelations, and the Lord, his wise and gracious keeper, saw fit, in order to prevent it, that a messenger from Satan should be given him to buffet him. Pride is so subtle, that it can gather strength, even from those gracious manifestations which seem directly calculated to mortify it; so dangerous, that a messenger from Satan himself may be esteemed a mercy, if over-ruled and sanctified by the Lord, to make or keep us more humble: therefore, though we can never be too earnest in striving against sin, too watchful in abstaining from all appearance of evil, and though they who wait upon the Lord may comfortably hope, that he will preserve them from such things as would dishonour their profession in the sight of men, yet I apprehend they who appear most to adorn the gospel in their outward conversation, are conscious of many things between the Lord and their own souls, which covers them with shame, and that his tenderness and mercy to them, notwithstanding their perverseness, constrains them with admiration to adopt the language of Micah, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" and I believe likewise, that, without such striking and repeated proofs of what is in their hearts, they would not so feelingly enter into the spirit of Job's confession, "Behold, I am vile!" nor would they have such a lively sense of their obligations to the merciful care and faithfulness of their great Shepherd, or of their entire and absolute dependence upon him, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I find these considerations useful and necessary to reconcile me to my lot. The Lord knows what I need, and what I can bear: gladly would I receive, earnestly would I desire, more of comforts while here; but if I mourn now, I hope to be comforted in heaven. In the mean time it is more immediately necessary for me, both as a christian and as a minister, that I should be humbled; the Lord's will be done. I cannot pretend to determine what ministers, or what body of people come nearest the character of the primitive times, but in my judgment they are the happiest who have the lowest thoughts of themselves, and in whose eyes Jesus is most glorious and precious.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVIII.

THAT TRUE RELIGION IS NECESSARY, IN ORDER TO THE BEST ENJOYMENT OF THE PLEASURES OF THE PRESENT LIFE.

TO A GAY FRIEND.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I truly love you, and have no reason to doubt of the reality of your friendship to me; yet I cannot but apprehend, that notwithstanding our mutual regard, and my frequent attempts to be witty, if I could, for your diversion, there is a something in most of my letters (which I cannot, dare not, wholly suppress), that disgusts and wearies you, and makes you less inclined to keep up a frequent intercourse than you would otherwise be. Rather than lose you quite, I will in general spare you as much as I can; but at present you must bear with me, and allow me full scope. You have given me a challenge, which I know not how to pass over; and since you so far justify my preaching, as to condescend to preach (in your way) yourself, permit me

for this time, to preach again, and to take some passages in your letter for my text.

In the present debate, I will accept your compliment, and suppose myself to be, as you say, a man of sense. You allow, then, that all the sense is not on your side. This, indeed, you cannot deny; for whatever becomes of me, it is needless to tell you, that Hale, Boyle, and other great names I could mention, were men of as great penetration and judgment, had as good opportunities, and took as much pains to be informed of the truth, as any of the advocates for infidelity can pretend to. And you cannot, with any modesty or consistence, absolutely determine, that they had not as good grounds for thinking themselves right, as you can have for concluding they were wrong.

But, declining the advantage of human authority, I am content the point should rest between you and me. And here I beg you to observe, that I have one evident advantage over you in judging, namely, that I have experienced the good and evil on both sides, and you only on one. If you were to send me an inventory of your pleasures, how charmingly your time runs on, and how dexterously it is divided between the coffee-houses, play-house, the card-table, and tavern, with intervals of balls, concerts, &c.; I could answer, that most of these I have tried, and tried again, and know the utmost they can yield, and have seen enough of the rest, most heartily to despise them all. Setting religion entirely out of the question, I profess I had rather be a worm to crawl upon the ground, than to bear the name of Man upon the poor terms of whiling away my life in an insipid round of such insignificant and unmanly trifles. I will return your own expression,—I believe you to be a person of sense; but alas! how do you prostitute your talents and capacity; how far do you act below yourself, if you know no higher purpose of life than these childish dissipations, together with the more serious business of rising early and sitting up late, to amass money, that you may be able to enlarge your expenses! I am sure, while I lived in these things, I found them unsatisfying and empty to the last degree; and the only advantage they afforded (miserable are they who are forced to deem it an advantage) was, that they often relieved me from the trouble and burden of thinking. If you have any other pleasures than these, ey are such as must be evil and inconve-ent, even upon your own plan; and, there-re, my friendship will not allow me to bring em into the account. I am willing to hope u do not stoop still lower in pursuit of sa-faction. Thus far we stand upon even round. You know all that a life of pleasure n give, and I know it likewise.

On the other hand, if I should attempt to lain to you the source and streams of my pleasures, such as a comfortable assurance of the pardon of my sins, an habitual communion with the God who made heaven and earth, a calm reliance on the divine providence, the cheering prospect of a better life in a better world, with the pleasing foretastes of heaven in my own soul; should I, or could I, tell you the pleasure I often find in reading the scriptures, in the exercise of prayer, and in that sort of preaching and conversation which you despise; I doubt not but you would think as meanly of my happiness as I do of yours. But here lies the difference, my dear friend, you condemn that which you have never tried. You know no more of these things than a blind man does of colours; and, notwithstanding all your flourishes, I defy you to be at all times able to satisfy yourself, that things may not possibly be as I have represented them.

Besides, what do I lose upon my plan, that should make me so worthy of your pity? Have you a quicker relish in the prudent use of temporal comforts? Do you think I do not eat my food with as much pleasure as you can do, though, perhaps, with less cost and variety? Is your sleep sounder than mine? Have not I as much satisfaction in social life? It is true, to join much with the gay fluttering tribe, who spend their days in laugh and sing-song, is equally contrary to my duty and inclination. But I have friends and acquaintance as well as you. Among the many who favour me with their esteem and friendship, there are some who are persons of sense, learning, wit, and (what, perhaps, may weigh as much with you) of fortune and distinction. And if you should say, "Ay, but they are all enthusiasts like yourself," you would say nothing to the purpose, since, upon your maxim, that "happiness is according to opinion," it cannot be an objection, but the contrary, to have my acquaintance to my own taste. Thus much for the brighter side of your situation; or, let me add one thing more. I know you have thoughts of marriage; do you think, if you should enter into this relation, your principles are calculated to make you more happy in it than I am? You are well acquainted with our family-life. Do you propose to know more of the peace and heart-felt joy of domestic union than I have known, and continue to know to this hour? I wish you may equal us; and if you do, we shall still be as before, but upon even ground. I need not turn deist, to enjoy the best and the most that this life can afford.

But I need not tell you, that the present life is not made up of pleasureable incidents only. Pain, sickness, losses, disappointments, injuries, and affronts with men, will more or less, at one time or other be our lot. And can you bear these trials better than I? You will not pretend to it. Let me appeal to yourself: How often do you toss and disquiet yourself, like a wild bull in a net, when

things cross your expectations? As your thoughts are more engrossed by what you see, you must be more keenly sensible of what you feel. You cannot view these trials as appointed by a wise and heavenly Father, in subservience to your good: you cannot taste the sweetness of his promises, nor feel the secret supports of his strength, in an hour of affliction; you cannot so cast your burden and care upon him, as to find a sensible relief to your spirit thereby; nor can you see his hand engaged and employed in effecting your deliverance. Of these things you know no more than of the art of flying; but I seriously assure you, and I believe my testimony will go farther with you than my judgment, that they are realities, and that I have found them to be so. When my worldly concerns have been most thorny and discouraging, I have once and again felt the most of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. However, I may state the case still lower. You do pretty well among your friends; but how do you like being alone? Would you not give something for that happy secret, which could enable you to pass a rainy day pleasantly, without the assistance of business, company, or amusement? Would it not mortify you greatly to travel for a week in an unfrequented road, where you should meet with no lively incidents to recruit and raise your spirits? Alas! what a poor scheme of pleasure is yours, that will not support an interval of reflection!

What you have heard is true: I have a few friends, who meet at my house once a-fortnight, and we spend an hour or two in worshipping the God who made us. And can this move your indignation or your compassion? Does it shew a much nobler spirit, a more refined way of thinking, to live altogether without God in the world? If I kept a card-assembly at those times, it would not displease you. How can you, as a person of sense, avoid being shocked at your own unhappy prejudice? But I remember how it was once with myself, and forbear to wonder. May He who has opened my eyes, open yours. He only can do it. I do not expect to convince you by any thing I can say as of myself; but if He is pleased to make use of me as his instrument, then you will be convinced. How should I then rejoice! I should rejoice to be useful to any one, but especially to you, whom I dearly love. May God shew you your true self, and your true state; then you will attentively listen to what you now disdain to hear of, his goodness in providing redemption and pardon for the chief of sinners, through him who died upon the cross for sins not his own. Keep this letter by you at my request; and when you write, tell me that you receive it in good part, and that you still believe me to be, &c.

LETTER XXXIX.

A WORD IN SEASON.

DEAR SIR,

In this dark and declining day, when iniquity abounds, the awful tokens of God's displeasure are multiplying around us, and too many professors, not duly sensible of the real cause of all the evils we either feel, or have reason to fear, are disputing, instead of praying, may the Lord bestow upon you and me, and upon all who fear his name, a spirit suited to the times; that the words of David, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved," may express the very sensation and frame of our hearts. Permit me to keep this expression in my view while I write, though it may perhaps give my letter something of the air of a sermon.

The Hebrew word answering to "I was grieved," signifies such a kind of grief as is mixed with dislike; such a grief as a believer must feel when he has a sense of his own corruptions. It is frequently rendered, as in Ezek. xx. 43. *to loathe*: "You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." We are not required strictly to hate ourselves, but the evil that is in us. So, when we look at transgressors, we are not to hate, but to pity them, mourn over them, and pray for them; nor have we any right to boast over them; for by nature, and of ourselves, we are no better than they. But their sinfulness should cause a dislike, an holy indignation; as it is recorded of our Lord, who, though full of compassion and tenderness, so that he wept over his enemies, and prayed for his actual murderers, yet looked upon transgressors with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.

A feeling of this kind seems essential to that new nature which characterises the children of God; and, where it is not in habitual exercise, it is a sufficient evidence that the soul, if truly alive to God at all, is at least in a lean and distempered state. Who can avoid being grieved and hurt by that which is in direct opposition to what he most loves? Believers love holiness, and, unless when stupified by the arts of Satan, can hardly bear themselves for what they find contrary to it within their own breasts, and must therefore, of course, be grieved with the sins of others. Like righteous Lot, and from his principles, they are "vexed with the conversation of the wicked." Can they who reverence the name of God be easy and unconcerned when they hear it blasphemed? No: their ears are wounded, and their hearts are pained. Can they who are followers of peace and purity behold unmoved the riots, licentiousness, and

daring wickedness of those who have cast off both shame and fear? Can they who have bowels of mercy and compassion, be unaffected when they see the iron hand of oppression grinding the faces of the poor? Or can any who love the songs of Zion, help being shocked with the songs of drunkards? I trust there are many, who, upon these accounts, are daily crying, "My soul is among lions:" "Wo is me that I dwell in Meshech!" "O gather not my soul with sinners." The thought of being shut up for ever with the ungodly would be terrible as hell to a gracious soul, though there were no devouring fire, no keen sense of the wrath of God to be feared.

They are grieved likewise upon their Lord's account, for they have obtained a spark of zeal for his honour and glory. With Elijah, they are "very jealous for the Lord of hosts." They feel their obligations to him, and know he well deserves to reign in every heart. But when, on the contrary, they see almost every one in a conspiracy against him, despising him to his face, trampling upon his laws, rejecting his authority, and abusing his patience, their eyes affect their hearts. What man of sensibility could brook to see every one about him contriving how to affront and injure the person whom he most loved? Now the Lord is the believer's best friend, the beloved of his soul; and therefore he is grieved and troubled when he "beholds the transgressors."

This emotion is likewise heightened by compassion to souls. Grace gives some view of the evil of sin, the dreadfulness of the wrath of God, and the vast importance of that word eternity. Thus instructed in the sanctuary of God, they would be stocks and stones, were they capable of beholding sinners rushing upon destruction without being grieved for them. But they cannot bear it: they cannot but give and repeat a faithful warning, though they have little reason to expect any better return than scorn and ill-treatment for what the world accounts an impertinent officiousness.

But who then are believers? Who are thus "on the Lord's side?" If these sentiments are common and radical to all who are born of God, can we make no abatement? Or must we unchristian perhaps the greater part of professors at this time? for it is too evident that many, who bear the name of gospel-professors, discover but little of this concern.

general, I think this subject affords no proper test for the trial of our spirits. The ects of grace, in similar circumstances, are iform; but if any, who think themselves sessors of it, feel no grief for the abound- of sin and the obstinacy of sinners, they er from the saints recorded both in the d and New Testament, and it will be their dom to examine and take heed lest they be eived. It is easy to call Christ, Lord, Lord; but a criminal lukewarmness of spirit where his cause, honour, and gospel are in question, will one day meet with an awful rebuke, and be treated, in those who make mention of his name, as high treason against his person and government.

But if we allow that, through the contagion of the times and the power of Satan, it is possible for true christians to sink into this indifference, and for the wise, as well as the foolish virgins, to sleep, when they should be watching unto prayer; even these have much to fear, lest they should largely participate in the sufferings which the provocations they connive at have a direct tendency to bring upon a sinful people. When national sins draw down national judgments, the Lord has given us a hope, that he will fix a mark of protection upon them who sigh and mourn in secret before him, for the evils which they are unable to prevent. To these he will be a sanctuary; he will either preserve them unhurt in the midst of surrounding calamities, or he will support them with consolations superior to all their troubles, when the hearts of others are shaken like leaves in a storm. But none have reason to expect to be thus privileged, who have not a heart given them to lament their own sins and the sins of those among whom they live.

Surely the Lord has a controversy with this land; and there hardly can be a period assigned in the annals of ages, when it was more expedient or seasonable for those who fear him to stir up each other to humiliation and prayer than at present. What is commonly called our national debt is swelled to an enormous greatness. It may be quickly expressed in figures; but a person must be something versed in calculation to form a tolerable idea of accumulated millions. But what arithmetic is sufficient to compute the immensity of our national debt in a spiritual sense? or, in other words, the amount of our national sins? The spirit of infidelity, which, for a time, distinguished comparatively a few, and, like a river, was restrained within narrow bounds, has of late years broken down its banks and deluged the land. This wide-spreading evil has, in innumerable instances, as might be expected, emboldened the natural heart against the fear of God, hardened it to an insensibility of moral obligation, and strengthened its prejudices against the gospel. The consequence has been, that profligate wickedness is become almost as universal as the air we breathe, and is practised with little more reserve or secrecy than the transactions of common business, except in such instances as would subject the offender to the penalty of human laws. O the unspeakable patience of God! The multiplied instances of impiety, blasphemy, cruelty, adultery, villany, and abominations not to be thought of without horror, under which this land groans, are only

known to him who knoweth all things. There are few sins which imply greater contempt of God, or a more obdurate state of mind in the offender, than perjury, yet the guilt of it is so little regarded, and temptations to it so very frequent, that perhaps I do not go too far in supposing there are more deliberate acts of perjury committed amongst us than among all the rest of mankind taken together. Though some of the Roman poets and historians have given very dark pictures of the times they lived in, their worst descriptions of this kind would hardly be found exaggerated if applied to our own. But what are the sins of heathens, if compared with the like evils perpetrated in a land bearing the name of christian, favoured with the word of God, the light of the gospel, and enjoying the blessings of civil and religious liberty and peace in a higher degree, and for a longer continuance, than was afforded to any people of whose history we have heard?

The state of the churches of Christ at this time affords likewise ample cause for humiliation and grief. The formality, conformity to the world, the want of love, the intemperate, and unprofitable contentions, which prevail among us, shew how faintly the power of the gospel is felt, even by many who profess to have embraced it. The true and undefiled doctrine of Jesus is not only opposed by its declared enemies, but wounded and dishonoured in the house of its friends. And though the sins of those who avow subjection to the institutions of Christ, may not have so gross a stamp of profligacy and immorality, as of those who set him openly at defiance; yet they have, in some respects, an aggravation, of which the others are not capable; as being committed against clearer light, and peculiar acknowledged obligations. From the consideration of both taken together, who, that has a spark of seriousness and attention, and that has learned from scripture and history the sure connection between sin and trouble, can forbear trembling at that alarming question, so often proposed to the consciences of ungrateful Israel of old, "Shall not I visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" especially when we see the dispensations of God's providence so awfully corresponding with the threatenings in his word.

How much is it to be desired, then, that all who truly fear the Lord, instead of wasting their time in useless squabbles, may unite in earnest prayer; and, with deep compunction of heart, bemoan those evils, which, unless repented of and forsaken, may bring upon us, as a people, such distress as neither we, nor our fathers have known! If he is pleased thus to give us a heart to seek him, he will yet be found of us; but if, when his hand is lifted up, we cannot, or will not see, nor regard the signs of the times, there is great reason to fear, that our case is deplorable indeed.

A few, however, there will be, who will lay these things suitably to heart; and whom the Lord will favour and spare, as a man spareth his only son that serveth him. That you and I may be of this happy number, is the sincere prayer of, &c.

LETTER XL.

A WORD TO PROFESSORS IN TRADE.

DEAR SIR,

It is suspected, or rather it is too certainly known, that, among those who are deemed gospel-professors, there are some persons who allow themselves in the practice of dealing in prohibited, uncustomed, or, as the common phrase is, smuggled goods, to the prejudice of the public revenue, and the detriment of the fair trader.

The decisions of the word of God upon this point, are so plain and determinate, that it is rather difficult to conceive how a sincere mind can either overlook or mistake them. The same authority which forbids us to commit adultery, or murder, requires us to "render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's;" to render unto all their dues: tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom. These precepts enjoin no more than what the common sense of mankind pronounces to be due from subjects and members of society, to the governments they live under, and by which they are protected. But the obligation is greatly enforced upon those who acknowledge themselves the disciples of Christ, since he has been pleased to make their compliance herein a part of the obedience they owe to himself. And it is plain, that these injunctions are universal and binding, under all civil governments, as such; for none can justly suppose that tributes exacted by the Roman emperors, (under whose dominion the first christians lived) such as Tiberius or Nero, had the sanction of our Lord and his apostles on account of their peculiar equity.

The vending smuggled goods, or the buying them, if known to be so, is likewise injurious to the fair trader, who, conscientiously paying the prescribed duties, cannot afford to sell so cheap as the smuggler; and, therefore, must expect the fewer customers. In this view, it offends the royal law, of "doing to others as we would they should do unto us." The force of this argument may be easily felt by any one who will honestly make the case his own. Without any nice reasoning, people may know in a moment, that they should not like to be put to this disadvantage. It is, therefore, unjust, (i. e. sinful, and utterly un

becoming a professor of religion) to purchase smuggled goods, even in small quantities, and for family-use. As for those who, being in trade themselves, make this practice a branch of their business, and, under the semblance of a fair reputation, are doing things in secret, which they would tremble to have discovered, being afraid of the exchequer, though not of God, I can only pray, that God may give them repentance; for it is a work of darkness, and needs it. Transactions of this kind cannot be carried on for a course of time, without such a series and complication of fraud and meanness*, and, for the most part, of perjury likewise, as would be scandalous, not only in a professed christian, but in an avowed infidel.

It should be observed likewise, that there is hardly any set of men more lost to society, or in a situation more dangerous to themselves and others, than the people who are called smugglers. Frequent fightings, and sometimes murder itself, are the consequence of their illicit commerce. Their money is ill gotten, and it is generally ill spent. They are greatly to be pitied. The employment they are accustomed to has a direct tendency to deprive them of character, and the privileges of social life, and to harden their hearts, and stupify their consciences, in the ways of sin. But for whom are they risking their lives, and ruining their souls? I would hope, reader, not for you, if you account yourself a christian. If you, for the sake of gain, encourage and assist them, by buying or selling their goods, you are so far responsible for the consequences. You encourage them in sin; you expose them to mischief. And have you so learned Christ? Is this the testimony you give of the uprightness of your hearts and ways? Is it thus you shew your compassion for the souls of men? Ah! shake your hands from gain so dearly earned. Think not to support the cause of God with such gain; he hates robbery for burnt-offering. Think it not lawful, or safe, to put a farthing of it into your treasury, lest it secretly communicate a moth and a curse to all that you possess; for it is the price of blood, the blood of souls. If you are indeed a child of God, and will persist in this path after admonition received, be assured your sin will find you out. If the Lord loves you, he will not suffer you to prosper in your perverseness. You y rather expect, that as a little damaged n is sufficient to spoil the whole heap to ich it is laid, so money, thus obtained, will rive you of the blessing and comfort you ght otherwise expect from your lawful ac- isitions.

If you are determined to persist in opposi- to scripture, to law, to equity and humanity, you have, doubtless, as I suppose you a professor, some plea or excuse with which you attempt to justify yourself and to keep your conscience quiet. See to it, that it be such a one as will bear the examination of a dying hour. You will not surely plead that "things are come to such a pass, there is no carrying on business upon other terms to advantage!" Will the practice of the world, who know not Christ, be a proper precedent for you who call yourself by his name? That cannot be, since his command is, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." That the truth and power of his grace may be manifested, he is pleased to put his servants into such situations, that they must forego some seeming advantages, and suffer some seeming hardships, in their worldly connections, if they will approve themselves faithful to him, and live in the exercise of a good conscience. He promises, that his grace shall be sufficient for them. It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich; and, for want of this, we see many rise early, take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, to no purpose. And I believe, integrity and diligence in business, with a humble dependence upon his providence, are the best methods of thriving even in temporals. However, they who lose for him are in no danger of losing by him. They may be confident of so much as he sees best for them; and they shall have his peace and blessing with it. But if, when you are placed in a state of trial, the love of the world is so powerful in your heart, that you cannot resist the temptation of enriching yourself by unlawful means, you have great reason to fear you have not his Spirit, and are therefore none of his.

I am, &c.

* Dr Johnson, defining a smuggler, says, he is "a ch who imports or exports goods without payment customs."

LETTER XLI.

ON THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

DEAR SIR,

THE saints on earth, though exposed to many sufferings, and assaulted by many enemies, are as safe as the saints in glory. They have been enabled, in the day of God's power to commit themselves to the care of Jesus, the great shepherd, who is faithful to his trust, and able to save them to the uttermost. His eye is always upon them, his everlasting arms are underneath them, and no power, or policy, can separate them from his love.

The apostle, in the name and behalf of the church militant, having taking a leisurely and distinct survey of all the difficulties and opposition they can possibly meet with, in life or in death, from the visible or invisible worlds, triumphs in an assurance, that none of these things singly, nor all of them together, shall prevail; but that, on the contrary, believers

shall be made conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, through him who has loved them.

In the course of his enumeration of the real or supposed dangers to which the people of Christ are exposed, he particularly mentions, angels, principalities, and powers, intimating to us a subject of great importance, though too seldom and too faintly attended to by us; I mean the part which the inhabitants of the unseen world take in our concerns. Angel is a general name; the terms, principalities and powers, and elsewhere, thrones and dominions, applied to them, we shall not, perhaps, clearly understand, till we mingle with the world of spirits. These different names seem, however, to imply that some difference of degree, and possibly some subordination of rule, obtains among them. But they shall not be able either singly or collectively to separate believers from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

The general distribution of angels, principalities, and powers, is into good and evil. They were all created glorious and excellent creatures; for nothing but good could originally proceed from God, the fountain of goodness. But some of them "kept not their first estate." Sin despoiled them of their glory, and changed them from angels of light into powers of darkness. And though they have a permissive liberty, subservient to the limitations and designs of divine wisdom, to influence the minds, and to interfere in the affairs of mankind; yet they are confined in chains of darkness which they cannot break, and are reserved to the judgment of the great day.

There are likewise an innumerable company of elect or good angels, Rev. iii. 11. who were preserved by sovereign grace, and are now established (together with believers) in Christ Jesus, the great head of the whole family of God, in heaven and in earth. From these, we may be sure, belivers have nothing to fear. They are our brethren and fellow-servants. They join in the song of the redeemed before the throne; and rejoice in the conversion of a sinner upon earth. We cannot include these in the apostle's challenge, any farther than by way of supposition; as he expresses himself upon another occasion, Gal. i. 8. It is not possible that an angel from heaven should preach, if he came to preach, any other gospel than that which is revealed in scripture; but if such a thing could be supposed, we ought not to regard him. So it is not to be thought that the elect angels of God should wish to hinder the salvation of a sinner. But if you conceive for a moment, that any, or all of them could form such a design, they would not be able to succeed; for they are all subject to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. So far, however, are the holy angels from designing us harm, that they are greatly instrumental in promoting our good. They are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation;" and they rejoice in the service, and account it their honour to be thus employed.

I propose, in this paper, briefly to consider the ministry of good angels; and may, perhaps, hereafter offer a few thoughts on the influence and interference of evil angels, who are continually labouring to disturb and trouble those whom they are not permitted to destroy. And I shall not attempt to amuse the reader with new and strange conjectures upon these subjects, or to intrude into those things which are not revealed, but shall confine myself to the express declarations of the word of God.

The great God works all in all, in both worlds. It is he who filleth the earth with good things, causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and provides corn for the food of man. But in thus spreading a table for us he makes use of instruments. He commands his sun to shine, and his rain to descend. So he is the life, strength, and comfort of the renewed soul. All the streams of grace flow from Christ, the fountain. But, from the analogy observable in his works, we might reasonably suppose, that, on many occasions, he is pleased to use means and instruments, and particularly the ministry of his angels, to communicate good to his children. Scripture expressly confirms this inference, and leaves it no longer a point of mere conjecture. He gives his angels charge over them, and they encamp round about them that fear him. In this way honour is given to Jesus, as the Lord both of angels and men; and a sweet intercourse is kept up between the different parts of the household of God. That angels have been thus employed in fact, is plain from the history both of the Old and New Testament. They have often made themselves visible when sent to declare the will of God; as to Jacob, Elijah, and David. Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and Mary; and a multitude joined in ascribing "glory to God in the highest" when they brought to the shepherds the joyful news of a Saviour's birth. An angel delivered Peter from prison, and comforted Paul when tossed by a tempest upon the sea. How far the visible ministration of angels is continued in these days is not easy to determine. Many persons have been imposed upon by Satan, through such expectations; and it is not safe to look for extraordinary things; yet I do not know that we have warrant from scripture to limit the Lord, so far as to affirm, that he doth not, nor ever will, upon any occasion, permit his angels to be seen by men, as in former times. The apostle, pressing believers to exercise hospitality, uses this argument, that "thereby some have entertained angels unawares;" which would hardly seem to be a pertinent motive, if it were absolutely certain that an-

gels would never offer themselves as visitants to the servants of God in future times as they had formerly done. But, waving speculations as to their visible appearance, it is sufficient to know that they are really, though invisibly, near us, and mindful of us.

May we not receive assistance from the angels in our spiritual warfare? That evil angels have an influence and power to distress and disquiet us, is well known to exercised souls; and it seems quite reasonable to believe, that the good angels are as willing and as able to communicate helpful and encouraging impressions. As it is not always easy to distinguish between the temptations of Satan and the workings of our own evil hearts; so it may be equally or more difficult to distinguish these assistances from the effects of gracious principles abiding in us, or from the leadings and motions of the Holy Spirit. Nor need we be anxious about it. We cannot err in ascribing all to the Lord. Yet there is something cheering in the thought that we are accompanied and surrounded by these blessed spirits, who have both inclination and ability to relieve, strengthen, and admonish us, in ways which we cannot fully understand. Who can tell how often, and how seasonably, a promise, a caution, a direction, from or agreeable to the word of God, is darted upon our minds by these kind messengers of our Father's love?

We may warrantably think they are employed in restraining, over-ruling, and controuling the designs of Satan and his angels. The power, malice, and subtilty of our enemy are very great. We may learn what he would do to us all, if he could, from the instance of Job. But the Lord rebukes him, and that most probably by the ministry of unfallen angels, who are said to encamp round his people to deliver them; and doubtless their care is especially employed where the greatest danger lies. Much to this purpose seems to be implied in the following passages, Dan. x. 13, Rev. xii. 7, Jude 9.

They are witnesses to the sufferings and to the worship of his people, 1 Cor. iv. 9. Though they do not show themselves to us, as heretofore to Peter or Paul, they are still near and attentive, are interested in the conflicts and rejoice in the victories of a poor believer. They are present likewise in our solemn assemblies; therefore the apostle charges Timothy, as "before the elect angels," and seems to refer to them in 1 Cor. xi. 10. This reflection should enliven and regulate our thoughts when we come together; for, though the presence of our Lord and Saviour is the great consideration, yet this likewise may, in its proper place, have some influence to compose our behaviour, Heb. xii. 22.

The ministry of angels preserves us from innumerable dangers and alarms which await us in our daily path. This is expressly taught in Psalm xci. When we receive little or no harm from a fall, or when a sudden motion of our minds leads us to avoid a danger which we were not aware of, perhaps the angels of God have been the means of our preservation; nay, it may be owing to their good offices that we ever perform a journey in safety, or are preserved from the evils we are liable to when sleeping upon our beds, and incapable of taking any care of ourselves.

Finally, they are appointed to attend the saints in their last hours, and, in a manner beyond our present apprehension, to keep off the powers of darkness, and bear the children of God safely home to their Father's house, Luke xvi. 22.

The limits of a sheet will not admit of enlargement upon these particulars. The subject is pleasing and comfortable, and well suited to encourage believers under two very common trials.

1. We are often cast down to think how few there are who worship God in spirit and in truth, and are ready to complain, with Elijah, that we are almost left to serve him alone. But Jesus is not slighted and despised in yonder world as he is in this. If, like the servant of Elisha, our eyes were supernaturally opened to take a glance within the vail, what a glorious and astonishing prospect would the innumerable host of angels afford us! Then we should be convinced that, far from being alone, there are unspeakably more for us than against us. Faith supplies the want of sight, is the evidence of things not seen, and, upon the authority of the word of God, is as well satisfied of their existence and employment as if they were actually in our view.

Again, 2. Many of the Lord's people are tempted to think themselves neglected by their fellow-christians because they are poor, a discouragement for which there is often too much occasion given. But, poor believer, be not greatly distressed upon this account. If your brethren upon earth are too prone to slight you, your heavenly friends are not so proud and foolish. The angels will attend and assist you, though you live in a poor mud-walled cottage, as willingly as if you were lodged in the palace of a king. They are not affected, one way or the other, with those trivial distinctions which are so apt to bias the judgment and regard of mortals.

May we take a pattern from the angels! Their whole desire is to fulfil the will of God, and they account no service mean in which he is pleased to employ them, otherwise, great and holy as they are, they might disdain to wait upon sinful worms. Our vanity prompts us to aim at something great, and to wish for such services as might make us known, talked of and regarded. But a child of God, if in the way of duty, and in the place which the Lord's providence has allotted him, is well employed, though he should have no higher

service than to sweep the streets, provided he does it humbly, thankfully, and heartily, as to the Lord. An angel so placed could do no more.

This paper will doubtless fall into the hands of some who are not believers, but are spending their days in sin. With a word to such as these, I would conclude. To you this is but a dark subject. You have reason to be alarmed; for, be assured, the whole host of heaven is against you, while they consider you in a state of rebellion against their Lord. They burn with an holy zeal to avenge his cause, and only wait his command to smite you as one of them smote Herod, for not giving glory to God. Pray for faith and repentance. If you believe in Jesus, and turn from your evil ways, the angels will love you, rejoice over you, watch over you, fight for you, and at last convey you into his glorious presence.

I am, &c.

March 5, 1777.

CARDIPHONIA;

OR,

THE UTTERANCE OF THE HEART:

IN THE COURSE OF

A REAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Hæc res et jungit, junctos et servat amicos.
Hor. Lib. i. Sat. 3.

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.
Prov. xxvii. 19.

LETTERS TO A NOBLEMAN.

LETTER I.

March—1765.

MY LORD,

I REMEMBER, when I once had the pleasure of waiting on you, you were pleased to begin an interesting conversation, which, to my concern, was soon interrupted. The subject was concerning the causes, nature, and marks of a decline in grace; how it happens that we loose that warm impression of divine things, which in some favoured moments we think it almost impossible to forget; how far this change of frame is consistent with a spiritual growth in other respects; how to form a comparative judgment of our proficiency upon the whole; and by what steps the losses we sustain from our necessary connection with a sinful nature and a sinful world may be retrieved from time to time. I beg your Lordship's permission to fill up the paper with a view to these inquiries. I do not mean to offer a laboured essay on them, but such thoughts as shall occur while the pen is in my hand.

The awakened soul (especially when, after a season of distress and terror, it begins to taste that the Lord is gracious) finds itself as in a new world. No change in outward life can be so sensible, so affecting. No wonder, then, that, at such a time, little else can be thought of. The transition from darkness to light, from a sense of wrath to a hope of glory, is the greatest that can be imagined, and is oftentimes as sudden as wonderful. Hence the general characteristics of young converts are zeal and love. Like Israel at the Red Sea, they have just seen the wonderful works of the Lord, and they cannot but sing his praise; they are deeply affected with the danger they have lately escaped, and with the case of multitudes around them, who are secure and careless in the same alarming situation; and a sense of their own mercies, and compassion for the souls of others, is so transporting, that they can hardly forbear preaching to every one they meet.

This emotion is highly just and reasonable, with respect to the causes from whence it springs; and it is doubtless a proof, not only of the imperfection, but the depravity of our nature, that we are not always thus affected. Yet it is not entirely genuine. If we examine this character closely, which seems, at first sight, a pattern and a reproof to christians of longer standing, we shall, for the most part, find it attended with considerable defects.

1. Such persons are very weak in faith. Their confidence arises rather from the lively impressions of joy within, than from a distinct and clear apprehension of the work of God in Christ. The comforts which are intended as cordials, to animate them against the opposition of an unbelieving world, they mistake and rest in as the proper evidences of their hope. And hence it comes to pass, that when the Lord varies his dispensations, and hides his face, they are soon troubled, and at their wits end.

2. They who are in this state of their first love, are seldom free from something of a censorious spirit. They have not yet felt all the deceitfulness of their own hearts; they are not well acquainted with the devices or temptations of Satan; and therefore know not how to sympathize or make allowances where allowances are necessary and due, and can hardly bear with any who do not discover the same earnestness as themselves.

3. They are likewise more or less under the influence of self-righteousness and self-will. They mean well; but not being as yet well acquainted with the spiritual meaning and proper use of the law, nor established in the life of faith, a part (oftentimes a very considerable part) of their zeal spends itself in externals and non-essentials, prompts them

to practise what is not commanded, to refrain from what is lawful, and to observe various and needless austerities and singularities, as their tempers and circumstances differ.

However, with all their faults, methinks there is something very beautiful and engaging in the honest vehemence of a young convert. Some cold and rigid judges are ready to reject these promising appearances on account of incidental blemishes. But would a gardener throw away a fine nectarine, because it is green, and has not yet attained all that beauty and flavour which a few more showers and suns will impart? Perhaps it will hold, for the most part, in grace as in nature; some exceptions there are: if there is not some fire in youth, we can hardly expect a proper warmth in old age.

But the great and good Husbandman watches over what his own hand has planted, and carries on his work by a variety of different, and even contrary dispensations. While their mountain stands thus strong, they think they shall never be moved; but at length they find a change. Sometimes it comes on by insensible degrees. That part of their affection, which was purely natural, will abate, of course, when the power of novelty ceases: they will begin, in some instances, to perceive their own indiscretions; and an endeavour to correct the excesses of imprudent zeal will often draw them towards the contrary extreme of remissness: the evils of their hearts, which, though overpowered, were not eradicated, will revive again: the enemy will watch his occasions to meet them with suitable temptations; and as it is the Lord's design that they should experimentally learn and feel their own weakness, he will, in some instances, be permitted to succeed. When guilt is thus brought upon the conscience, the heart grows hard, the hands feeble, and the knees weak; then confidence is shaken, the spirit of prayer interrupted, the armour gone, and thus things grow worse and worse, till the Lord is pleased to interpose; for though we can fall of ourselves, we cannot rise without his help. Indeed, every sin, in its own nature, has a tendency towards a final apostacy; but there is a provision in the covenant of grace, and the Lord, in his own time, returns to convince, humble, pardon, comfort, and renew the soul. He touches the rock, and the waters flow. By repeated experiments and exercises of this sort (for this wisdom is seldom acquired by one or a few lessons), we begin at length to learn that we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing but sin. And thus we are gradually prepared to live more out of ourselves, and to derive all our sufficiency of every kind from Jesus, the fountain of grace. We learn to tread more warily, to trust less to our own strength, to have lower thoughts of ourselves, and higher thoughts of him; in which two last particulars, I apprehend, what the scriptures mean by a growth of grace does properly consist. Both are increasing in the lively christian, every day shew him more of his own heart, and more of the power, sufficiency, compassion, and grace of his adorable Redeemer; but neither will be complete till we get to heaven.

I apprehend, therefore, that though we find an abatement of that sensible warmth of affection which we felt at first setting out; yet, if our views are more evangelical, our judgment more ripened, our hearts more habitually humbled under a sense of inward depravity, our tempers more softened into sympathy and tenderness; if our prevailing desires are spiritual, and we practically esteem the precepts, ordinances, and people of God; we may warrantably conclude, that his good work of grace in us is, upon the whole, on the increase.

But still it is to be lamented, that an increase of knowledge and experience should be so generally attended with a decline of fervour. If it was not for what has passed in my own heart, I should be ready to think it impossible. But this very circumstance gives me a still more emphatical conviction of my own vileness and depravity. The want of humiliation humbles me, and my very indifference rouses and awakens me to earnestness. There are, however, seasons of refreshment, ineffable glances of light and power upon the soul, which, as they are derived from clearer displays of divine grace, if not so tumultuous as the first joys, are more penetrating, transforming, and animating. A glance of these, when compared with our sluggish stupidity when they are withheld, weans the heart from this wretched state of sin and temptation, and makes the thoughts of death and eternity desirable. Then this conflict shall cease: I shall sin and wander no more, see him as he is, and be like him for ever.

If the question is, How are these bright moments to be prolonged, renewed, or retrieved? We are directed to faith and diligence. A careful use of the appointed means of grace, a watchful endeavour to avoid the occasions and appearances of evil, and especially assiduity in secret prayer, will bring as much as the Lord sees good for us. He knows best why we are not to be trusted with them continually. Here we are to walk by faith, to be exercised and tried; by and by we shall be crowned, and the desires he has given shall be abundantly satisfied.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

April—1766.

MY LORD,

I SHALL embrace your permission to fill my paper.—As to subject, that which has

been a frequent theme of my heart of late, I shall venture to lay before your Lordship: I mean the remarkable and humbling difference which I suppose all who know themselves may observe, between their acquired and their experimental knowledge, or, in other words, between their judgment and their practice. To hear a believer speak his apprehensions of the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the love of Christ, the beauty of holine s, or the importance of eternity, who would not suppose him proof against temptation? To hear with what strong arguments he can recommend watchfulness, prayer, forbearance, and submission, when he is teaching or advising others, who would not suppose but he could also teach himself, and influence his own conduct? Yet, alas! *quam dispar sibi!* The person who rose from his knees, before he left his chamber, a poor, indigent, fallible, dependent creature, who saw and acknowledged that he was unworthy to breathe the air, or to see the light, may meet with many occasions, before the day is closed, to discover the corruptions of his heart, and to show how weak and faint his best principles and clearest convictions are in their actual exercise. And in this view, how vain is man! what a contradiction is a believer to himself! He is called a believer emphatically, because he cordially assents to the word of God; but, alas! how often unworthy of the name! If I was to describe him from the scripture-character, I should say, he is one whose heart is athirst for God, for his glory, his image, his presence; his affections are fixed upon an unseen Saviour; his treasures, and consequently his thoughts, are on high, beyond the bounds of sense. Having experienced much forgiveness, he is full of bowels of mercy to all around; and having been often deceived by his own heart, he dares trust it no more, but lives, by faith in the Son of God, for wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and derives from him grace for grace; sensible that without him he has not sufficiency even to think a good thought. In short, he is dead to the world, to sin, to self, but alive to God, and lively in his service. Prayer is his breath, the word of God his food, and the ordinances more precious to him than the light of the sun. Such is a believer—in his judgment and prevailing desires.

But was I to describe him from experience, pecially at some times, how different would e picture be! Though he knows that communion with God is his highest privilege, e too seldom finds it so; on the contrary, if uty, conscience, and necessity, did not comel, he would leave the throne of grace unisited from day to day. He takes up the ble, conscious that it is the fountain of life d true comfort; yet, perhaps, while he is ing the reflection, he feels a secret dis, which prompts him to lay it down, and give his preference to a newspaper. He needs not to be told of the vanity and uncertainty of all beneath the sun; and yet is almost as much elated or cast down by a trifle, as those who have their portion in this world. He believes that all things shall work together for his good, and that the most high God appoints, adjusts, and over-rules all his concerns; yet he feels the risings of fear, anxiety, and displeasure, as though the contrary was true. He owns himself ignorant, and liable to be deceived by a thousand fallacies; yet is easily betrayed into positiveness and self-conceit. He feels himself an unprofitable, unfaithful, unthankful servant, and therefore blushes to harbour a thought of desiring the esteem and commendations of men; yet he cannot suppress it. Finally (for I must observe some bounds), on account of these, and many other inconsistencies, he is struck dumb before the Lord, stripped of every hope and plea, but what is provided in the free grace of God, and yet his heart is continually leaning and returning to a covenant of works.

Two questions naturally arise from such a view of ourselves. First, How can these things be, or why are they permitted? Since the Lord hates sin, teaches his people to hate it and cry against it, and has promised to hear their prayers, how is it that they go thus burdened? Surely if he could not or would not over-rule evil for good, he would not permit it to continue. By these exercises he teaches us more truly to know and feel the utter depravity and corruption of our whole nature, that we are indeed defiled in every part. His method of salvation is likewise hereby exceedingly endeared to us: we see that it is and must be of grace, wholly of grace; and that the Lord Jesus Christ, and his perfect righteousness, is and must be our all in all. His power likewise in maintaining his own work, notwithstanding our infirmities, temptations, and enemies, is hereby displayed in the clearest light, his strength is manifested in our weakness. Satan likewise is more remarkably disappointed and put to shame, when he finds bounds set to his rage and policy, beyond which he cannot pass; and that those in whom he finds too much to work upon, and over whom he so often prevails for a season, escape at last out of his hands. He casts them down, but they are raised again; he wounds them, but they are healed: he obtains his desire to sift them as wheat, but the prayer of their great Advocate prevails for the maintenance of their faith. Farther, by what believers feel in themselves they learn by degrees how to warn, pity, and bear with others. A soft, patient, and compassionate spirit, and a readiness and skill in comforting those who are cast down, is not perhaps attainable in any other way. And lastly, I believe nothing more habitually reconciles a child of God to the thought of death, than the wearisomeness of this

warfare. Death is unwelcome to nature: but then, and not till then, the conflict will cease. Then we shall sin no more. The flesh, with all its attendant evils, will be laid in the grave: then the soul, which has been partaker of a new and heavenly birth, shall be freed from every incumbrance, and stand perfect in the Redeemer's righteousness before God in glory.

But though these evils cannot be wholly removed, it is worth while to inquire, Secondly, How they may be mitigated. This we are encouraged to hope for. The word of God directs and animates to a growth in grace. And though we can do nothing spiritually of ourselves, yet there is a part assigned us. We cannot conquer the obstacles in our way by our own strength, yet we can give way to them, and if we do, it is our sin, and will be our sorrow. The disputes concerning inherent power in the creature, have been carried to inconvenient lengths: for my own part, I think it safest to use scriptural language. The apostles exhort us, to give all diligence, to resist the devil, to purge ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to give ourselves to reading, meditation, and prayer, to watch, to put on the whole armour of God, and to abstain from all appearance of evil. Faithfulness to light received, and a sincere endeavour to conform to the means prescribed in the word of God, with an humble application to the blood of sprinkling, and the promised Spirit, will undoubtedly be answered by increasing measures of light, faith, strength, and comfort; and we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

I need not tell your Lordship that I am an extempore writer. I dropt the consideration of whom I was addressing from the first paragraph; but I now return, and subscribe myself, with the greatest deference, &c.

LETTER III.

April—1770.

MY LORD,

I HAVE a desire to fill the paper, and must therefore betake myself to the expedient I lately mentioned. Glorious things are spoken of the city of God, or (as I suppose) the state of glory, in Rev. xxi. from verse 10. *ad finem*. The description is doubtless mystical, and, perhaps, nothing short of a happy experience and participation will furnish an adequate exposition. One expression, in particular, has, I believe, puzzled wiser heads than mine to explain. "The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." The construction likewise in the Greek is difficult. Some render it *pure gold transparent as glass*: this is the sense, but then it should be neuter, διαφανες, to agree with χρυσιον. If our reading is right, we must understand it either of gold pure, bright, and perspicuous as the finest transparent glass (for all glass is not transparent); or else, as two distinct comparisons, splendid and durable as the purest gold, clear and transparent as the finest glass. In that happy world the beauties and advantages which here are divided and incompatible, will unite and agree. Our glass is clear, but brittle; our gold is shining and solid, but it is opaque, and discovers only a surface. And thus it is with our minds. The powers of the imagination are lively and extensive, but transient and uncertain. The powers of the understanding are more solid and regular, but at the same time more slow and limited, and confined to the outside properties of the few objects around us. But when we arrive within the vail, the perfections of the glass and the gold will be combined, and the imperfections of each will entirely cease. Then we shall know more than we can now imagine. The glass will be all gold. And then we shall apprehend truth in its relations and consequences; not (as at present) by that tedious and fallible process which we call reasoning, but by a single glance of thought, as the sight pierces in an instant through the largest transparent bodies. The gold will be all glass.

I do not offer this as the sense of the passage, but as a thought which once occurred to me while reading it. I daily groan under a desultory, ungovernable imagination, and a palpable darkness of understanding, which greatly impede me in my attempts to contemplate the truths of God. Perhaps these complaints, in a greater or less degree, are common to all our fallen race, and exhibit mournful proofs that our nature is essentially depraved. The grace of God affords some assistance for correcting the wildness of the fancy, and enlarging the capacity of the mind: yet the cure at present is but palliative; but ere long it shall be perfect, and our complaints shall cease for ever. Now it costs us much pains to acquire a pittance of solid and useful knowledge; and the ideas we have collected are far from being at the disposal of judgment, and, like men in a crowd, are perpetually clashing and interfering with each other. But it will not be so, when we are completely freed from the effects of sin. Confusion and darkness will not follow us into the world where light and order reign. Then, and not till then, our knowledge will be perfect, and our possession of it uninterrupted and secure.

Since the radical powers of the soul are thus enfeebled and disordered, it is not to be wondered at, that the best of men, and under their highest attainments, have found cause to make the acknowledgement of the apostle, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." But, blessed be God, though we must

feel hourly cause for shame and humiliation for what we are in ourselves, we have cause to rejoice continually in Christ Jesus, who, as he is revealed to us under the various names, characters, relations, and offices, which he bears in the scriptures, holds out to our faith a balm for every wound, a cordial for every discouragement, and a sufficient answer to every objection which sin or Satan can suggest against our peace. If we are guilty, he is our righteousness; if we are sick, he is our infallible physician; if we are weak, helpless, and defenceless, he is the compassionate and faithful shepherd, who has taken charge of us, and will not suffer any thing to disappoint our hopes, or to separate us from his love. He knows our frame, he remembers that we are but dust, and has engaged to guide us by his counsel, support us by his power, and at length to receive us to his glory, that we may be with him for ever.

I am, with the greatest deference, &c.

LETTER IV.

February — 1772.

MY LORD,

I HAVE been sitting, perhaps a quarter of an hour, with my pen in my hand, and my finger upon my upper lip, contriving how I should begin my letter. A detail of the confused, incoherent thoughts which have successively passed through my mind, would have more than filled the sheet; but your Lordship's patience, and even your charity for the writer, would have been tried to the uttermost, if I could have penned them all down. At length my suspense reminded me of the apostle's words, Gal. v. 17. "Ye cannot do the things that ye would." This is an humbling, but a just account of a christian's attainments in the present life, and is equally applicable to the strongest and to the weakest. The weakest need not say less, the strongest will hardly venture to say more. The Lord has given his people a desire and will aiming at great things: without this they would be unworthy the name of christians; but they cannot do as they would. Their best desires are weak and ineffectual, not absolutely so (for he who works in them to will, enables them in a measure to do likewise), but in comparison with the mark at which they aim. So that while they have great cause to be thankful for the desire he has given them, and for the degree in which it is answered, they have equal reason to be ashamed and abased under a sense of their continual defects, and the evil mixtures which taint and debase their best endeavours. It would be easy to make out a long list of particulars which a believer would do if he could, but in which, from first to last, he finds a mortifying inability. Permit me to mention a few, which I need not transcribe from books, for they are always present to my mind.

He would willingly enjoy God in prayer He knows that prayer is his duty; but, in his judgment, he considers it likewise as his greatest honour and privilege. In this light he can recommend it to others, and can tell them of the wonderful condescension of the great God, who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, that he should stoop so much lower, to afford his gracious ear to the supplications of sinful worms upon earth. He can bid them expect a pleasure in waiting upon the Lord, different in kind, and greater in degree, than all that the world can afford. By prayer, he can say, You have liberty to cast all your cares upon him that careth for you. By one hour's intimate access to the throne of grace, where the Lord causes his glory to pass before the soul that seeks him, you may acquire more true spiritual knowledge and comfort, than by a day or a week's converse with the best of men, or the most studious perusal of many folios: and in this light he would consider it and improve it for himself. But, alas! how seldom can he do as he would! How often does he find this privilege a mere task, which he would be glad of a just excuse to omit! and the chief pleasure he derives from the performance, is to think that his task is finished: he has been drawing near to God with his lips, while his heart was far from him. Surely this is not doing as he would, when (to borrow the expression of an old woman here) he is dragged before God like a slave, and comes away like a thief.

The like may be said of reading the scriptures. He believes them to be the word of God; he admires the wisdom and grace of the doctrines, the beauty of the precepts, the richness and suitableness of the promises; and therefore, with David, he accounts it preferable to thousands of gold and silver, and sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Yet while he thus thinks of it, and desires that it may dwell in him richly, and be his meditation night and day, he cannot do as he would. It will require some resolution to persist in reading a portion of it every day; and even then his heart is often less engaged than when reading a pamphlet. Here again his privilege frequently dwindles into a task. His appetite is vitiated, so that he has but little relish for the food of his soul.

He would willingly have abiding, admiring thoughts of the person and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Glad is he, indeed, of those occasions which recal the Saviour to his mind; and, with this view, notwithstanding all discouragements, he perseveres in attempting to pray and read, and waits upon ordinances. Yet he cannot do as he would. Whatever claims he may have to the exercise of gratitud

and sensibility towards his fellow-creatures, he must confess himself mournfully ungrateful and insensible towards his best Friend and Benefactor. Ah! what trifles are capable of shutting Him out of our thoughts, of whom we say, he is the beloved of our souls, who loved us, and gave himself for us, and whom we have deliberately chosen as our chief good and portion. What can make us amends for the loss we suffer here? Yet surely if we could we would set him always before us; his love should be the delightful theme of our hearts,

> From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve.

But though we aim at this good, evil is present with us; we find we are renewed but in part, and have still cause to plead the Lord's promise, to take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh.

He would willingly acquiesce in all the dispensations of divine providence. He believes that all events are under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, and shall surely issue in the glory of God and the good of those who fear him. He doubts not but the hairs of his head are all numbered;—that the blessings of every kind which he possesses were bestowed upon him, and are preserved to him, by the bounty and special favour of the Lord whom he serves;—that afflictions spring not out of the ground, but are fruits and tokens of divine love, no less than his comforts;—that there is a need-be, whenever for a season he is in heaviness. Of these principles he can no more doubt than of what he sees with his eyes, and there are seasons when he thinks they will prove sufficient to reconcile him to the sharpest trials. But often when he aims to apply them in an hour of present distress, he cannot do what he would. He feels a law in his members warring against the law in his mind; so that, in defiance of the clearest convictions, seeing as though he perceived not, he is ready to complain, murmur, and despond. Alas! how vain is man in his best estate! How much weakness and inconsistency, even in those whose hearts are right with the Lord! And what reason have we to confess that we are unworthy, unprofitable servants!

It were easy to enlarge in this way, would paper and time permit. But, blessed be God, we are not under the law, but under grace; and even these distressing effects of the remnants of indwelling sin are over-ruled for good. By these experiences the believer is weaned more from self, and taught more highly to prize and more absolutely to rely on him, who is appointed unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The more vile we are in our own eyes, the more precious he will be to us; and a deep, repeated sense of the evil of our hearts is necessary to preclude all boasting, and to make us willing to give the whole glory of our salvation where it is due. Again, a sense of these evils will, when hardly any thing else can do it, reconcile us to the thoughts of death, yea make us desirous to depart that we may sin no more, since we find depravity so deep rooted in our nature, that, like the leprous house, the whole fabric must be taken down before we can be freed from its defilement. Then, and not till then, we shall be able to do the thing that we would: when we see Jesus we shall be transformed into his image, and have done with sin and sorrow for ever

I am, with great deference, &c.

LETTER V.

March — 1772.

MY LORD,

I think my last letter turned upon the apostle's thought, Gal. v. 17. "Ye cannot do the things that ye would." In the parallel place, Rom. vii. 19, there is another clause subjoined, "The evil which I would not, that I do." This, added to the former, would complete the dark side of my experience. Permit me to tell your Lordship a little part (for some things must not, cannot be told,) not of what I have read, but of what I have felt, in illustration of this passage.

I would not be the sport and prey of wild, vain, foolish, and worse imaginations, but this evil is present with me; my heart is like a highway, like a city without walls or gates. Nothing so false, so frivolous, so absurd, so impossible, or so horrid, but it can obtain access, and that at any time, or in any place; neither the study, the pulpit, nor even the Lord's table, exempt me from their intrusion. I sometimes compare my words to the treble of an instrument, which my thoughts accompany with a kind of bass, or rather anti-bass, in which every rule of harmony is broken, every possible combination of discord and confusion is introduced, utterly inconsistent with, and contradictory to, the intended melody. Ah! what music would my praying and preaching often make in the ear of the Lord of Hosts, if he listened to them as they are mine only! By men, the upper part only (if I may so speak) is heard; and small cause there is for self-gratulation, if they should happen to commend, when conscience tells me they would be struck with astonishment and abhorrence could they hear the whole.

But if this awful effect of heart-depravity cannot be wholly avoided in the present state of human nature, yet at least I would not allow and indulge it; yet this I find I do. In defiance of my best judgment and best wishes, I find something within me which cherishes and cleaves to those evils, from which I ought to start and flee, as I should if a toad or a ser-

pent was put in my food or in my bed. Ah! how vile must the heart, at least my heart, be, that can hold a parley with such abominations, when I so well know their nature and their tendency. Surely he who finds himself capable of this, may, without the least affectation of humility (however fair his outward conduct appears), subscribe himself less than the least of all saints, and of sinners the very chief.

I would not be influenced by a principle of self on any occasion; yet this evil I often do. I see the baseness and absurdity of such conduct as clearly as I see the light of the day. I do not affect to be thought ten feet high, and I know that a desire of being thought wise or good is equally contrary to reason and truth. I should be grieved or angry if my fellow-creatures supposed I had such a desire; and therefore I fear the very principle of self, of which I complain, has a considerable share in prompting my desires to conceal it. The pride of others often offends me, and makes me studious to hide my own, because their good opinion of me depends much upon their not perceiving it. But the Lord knows how this dead fly taints and spoils my best services, and makes them no better than specious sins.

I would not indulge vain reasonings concerning the counsels, ways, and providence of God, yet I am prone to do it. That the Judge of all the earth will do right, is to me as evident and necessary as that two and two make four. I believe that he has a sovereign right to do what he will with his own, and that his sovereignty is but another name for the unlimited exercise of wisdom and goodness. But my reasonings are often such as if I had never heard of these principles, or had formally renounced them. I feel the workings of a presumptuous spirit, that would account for every thing, and venture to dispute whatever it cannot comprehend. What an evil is this, for a potsherd of the earth to contend with its maker! I do not act thus towards my fellow-creatures; I do not find fault with the decisions of a judge, or the dispositions of a general, because, though I know they are fallible, yet I suppose they are wiser in their respective departments than myself. But I am often ready to take this liberty when it is most unreasonable and inexcusable.

I would not cleave to a covenant of works. It should seem from the foregoing particulars, nd many others which I could mention, that have reasons enow to deter me from this: et even this I do. Not but that I say, and hope from my heart, "Enter not into udgment with thy servant, O Lord." I emace it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all ceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the orld to save sinners; and it is the main pleaure and business of my life to set forth the cessity and all-sufficiency of the Mediator between God and man, and to make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. But here, as in every thing else, I find a vast difference between my judgment and my experience. I am invited to take the water of life freely, yet I am often discouraged, because I have nothing wherewith to pay for it. If I am at times favoured with some liberty from the above mentioned evils, it rather gives me a more favourable opinion of myself than increases my admiration of the Lord's goodness to so unworthy a creature; and when the returning tide of my corruptions convinces me that I am still the same, an unbelieving legal spirit would urge me to conclude that the Lord is changed: at least, I feel a weariness of being beholden to him for such continued multiplied forgiveness, and I fear that some part of my striving against sin, and my desires after an increase of sanctification arise from a secret wish that I might not be so absolutely and entirely indebted to him.

This, my Lord, is only a faint sketch of my heart, but it is taken from the life: it would require a volume rather than a letter to fill up the outlines. But I believe you will not regret that I chuse to say no more upon such a subject. But though my disease is grievous, it is not desperate; I have a gracious and infallible Physician. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

I remain, my Lord, &c.

LETTER VI.

April — 1772.

MY LORD,

My two last letters turned upon a mournful subject, the depravity of the heart, which impedes us when we would do good, and pollutes our best intended services with evil. We have cause, upon this account, to go softly all our days; yet we need not sorrow as those who have no hope. The Lord has provided his people relief under those complaints, and teaches us to draw improvement from them. If the evils we feel were not capable of being over-ruled for good, he would not permit them to remain in us. This we may infer from his hatred to sin, and the love which he bears to his people.

As to the remedy, neither our state nor his honour are affected by the workings of indwelling sin, in the hearts of those whom he has taught to wrestle, strive, and mourn, on account of what they feel. Though sin wars, it shall not reign: and though it breaks our peace, it cannot separate from his love. Nor is it inconsistent with his holiness and perfection, to manifest his favour to such poor defiled creatures, or to admit them to communion with himself; for they are not considered as in themselves, but as one with Je-

sus, to whom they have fled for refuge, and by whom they live a life of faith. They are accepted in the Beloved, they have an Advocate with the Father, who once made an atonement for their sins, and ever lives to make intercession for their persons. Though they cannot fulfil the law, he has fulfilled it for them; though the obedience of the members is defiled and imperfect, the obedience of the Head is spotless and complete; and though there is much evil in them, there is something good, the fruit of his own gracious Spirit. They act from a principle of love, they aim at no less than his glory, and their habitual desires are supremely fixed upon himself. There is a difference in kind between the feeblest efforts of faith in a real believer, while he is covered with shame at the thought of his miscarriages, and the highest and most specious attainments of those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight. Nor shall this conflict remain long, or the enemy finally prevail over them. They are supported by almighty power, and led on to certain victory. They shall not always be as they are now; yet a little while, and they shall be freed from this vile body, which, like the leprous house, is incurably contaminated, and must be entirely taken down. Then they shall see Jesus as he is, and be like him, and with him for ever.

The gracious purposes to which the Lord makes the sense and feeling of our depravity subservient, are manifold. Hereby his own power, wisdom, faithfulness, and love, are more signally displayed: His power,—in maintaining his own work in the midst of much opposition, like a spark burning in the water, or a bush unconsumed in the flames: His wisdom,—in defeating and controuling all the devices which Satan, from his knowledge of the evil of our nature, is encouraged to practise against us. He has overthrown many a fair professor, and, like Goliah, he challenges the whole army of Israel; yet he finds there are some against whom, though he thrusts sorely he cannot prevail; notwithstanding any seeming advantage he gains at some seasons, they are still delivered, for the Lord is on their side. The unchangeableness of the Lord's love, and the riches of his mercy, are likewise more illustrated by the multiplied pardons he bestows upon his people, than if they needed no forgiveness at all.

Hereby the Lord Jesus Christ is more endeared to the soul; all boasting is effectually excluded, and the glory of a full and free salvation is ascribed to him alone. If a mariner is surprised by a storm, and after one night spent in jeopardy, is presently brought safe into port; though he may rejoice in his deliverance, it will not affect him so sensibly, as if, after being tempest-tossed for a long season, and experiencing a great number and variety of hair-breadth escapes, he at last gains the desired haven. The righteous are said to be scarcely saved, not with respect to the certainty of the event, for the purpose of God in their favour cannot be disappointed, but in respect of their own apprehensions, and the great difficulties they are brought through. But when, after a long experience of their own deceitful hearts, after repeated proofs of their weakness, wilfulness, ingratitude, and insensibility, they find that none of these things can separate them from the love of God in Christ, Jesus becomes more and more precious to their souls. They love much, because much has been forgiven them. They dare not, they will not, ascribe any thing to themselves, but are glad to acknowledge, that they must have perished, if possible, a thousand times over, if Jesus had not been their Saviour, their shepherd, and their shield. When they were wandering, he brought them back; when fallen, he raised them; when wounded, he healed them; when fainting, he revived them. By him out of weakness they have been made strong; he has taught their hands to war, and covered their heads in the day of battle. In a word, some of the clearest proofs they have had of his excellence, have been occasioned by the mortifying proofs they have had of their own vileness. They would not have known as much of him, if they had not known so much of themselves.

Farther, a spirit of humiliation, which is both *decus et tutamen*, the strength and beauty of our profession, is greatly promoted by our feeling, as well as reading, that when we would do good, evil is present with us. A broken and a contrite spirit is pleasing to the Lord: he has promised to dwell with those who have it; and experience shews, that the exercise of all our graces is in proportion to the humbling sense we have of the depravity of our nature. But that we are so totally depraved, is a truth which no one ever truly learned by being only told it. Indeed, if we could receive, and habitually maintain a right judgment of ourselves, by what is plainly declared in the scriptures, it would probably save us many a mournful hour; but experience is the Lord's school, and they who are taught by him usually learn, that they have no wisdom by the mistakes they make, and that they have no strength by the slips and falls they meet with. Every day draws forth some new corruption, which before was little observed, or at least discovers it in a stronger light than before. Thus, by degrees, they are weaned from leaning to any supposed wisdom, power, or goodness in themselves; they feel the truth of our Lord's words, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and the necessity of crying, with David, "O lead me and guide me, for thy name's sake." It is chiefly by this frame of mind that one christian is differenced from another; for though it is an inward feeling, it has very observable outward

effects, which are expressively intimated, Ezek. xvi. 63, "Thou shalt be dumb, and not open thy mouth, in the day when I am pacified towards thee, saith the Lord God." The knowledge of my full and free forgiveness, of thy innumerable backslidings and transgressions, shall make thee ashamed, and silence the unruly workings of thine heart. Thou shalt open thy mouth in praise; but thou shalt no more boast in thyself, or censure others, or repine at my dispensations. In these respects we are exceedingly prone to speak unadvisedly with our lips. But a sense of great unworthiness and much forgiveness checks these evils. Whoever is truly humbled will not be easily angry, will not be positive and rash, will be compassionate and tender to the infirmities of his fellow-sinners, knowing, that if there be a difference, it is grace that has made it, and that he has the seeds of every evil in his own heart; and, under all trials and afflictions, he will look to the hand of the Lord, and lay his mouth in the dust, acknowledging that he suffers much less than his iniquities have deserved. These are some of the advantages and good fruits which the Lord enables us to obtain from that bitter root indwelling sin.

I am, with deference, &c.

LETTER VII.

September — 1772.

MY LORD,

WEAK, unskilful, and unfaithful as I am in practice, the Lord has been pleased to give me some idea of what a christian ought to be, and of what is actually attainable in the present life, by those whom he enables earnestly to aspire towards the prize of their high calling. They who are versed in mechanics can, from a knowledge of the combined powers of a complicated machine, make an exact calculation of what it is able to perform, and what resistance it can counteract; but who can compute the possible effects of that combination of principle and motives revealed in the gospel, upon a heart duly impressed with a sense of their importance and glory? When I was lately at Mr. Cox's museum, while I was fixing my attention upon some curious movements, imagining that I saw the whole of the artist's design, the person who showed it touched a little spring, and suddenly a thousand new and unexpected motions took place, and the whole piece seemed animated from the top to the bottom. I should have formed but a very imperfect judgment of it, had I seen no more than what I saw at first. I thought it might in some measure illustrate the vast difference that is observable amongst professors, even amongst those who are, it is to be hoped, sincere. There are persons, who appear to have a true knowledge, in part, of the nature of gospel religion, but seem not to be apprised of its properties, in their comprehension and extent. If they have attained to some hope of their acceptance, if they find at seasons some communion with God in the means of grace, if they are in measure delivered from the prevailing and corrupt customs of the world, they seem to be satisfied, as if they were possessed of all. These are indeed great things; *sed meliora latent*. The profession of too many, whose sincerity charity would be unwilling to impeach, is greatly blemished, notwithstanding their hopes and their occasional comforts, by the breakings forth of unsanctified tempers, and the indulgence of vain hopes, anxious cares, and selfish pursuits. Far, very far, am I from that unscriptural sentiment of sinless perfection in fallen man. To those who have a due sense of the spirituality and ground of the divine precepts, and of what passes in their own hearts, there will never be wanting causes of humiliation and self-abasement on the account of sin; yet still there is a liberty and privilege attainable by the gospel, beyond what is ordinarily thought of. Permit me to mention two or three particulars, in which those who have a holy ambition of aspiring to them shall not be altogether disappointed.

A delight in the Lord's all-sufficiency, to be satisfied in him as our present and eternal portion. This, in the sense in which I understand it, is not the effect of a present warm frame, but of a deeply-rooted and abiding principle, the habitual exercise of which is to be estimated by the comparative indifference with which other things are regarded. The soul, thus principled, is not at leisure to take or to seek satisfaction in any thing but what has a known subserviency to this leading taste. Either the Lord is present, and then he is to be rejoiced in; or else he is absent, and then he is to be sought and waited for. They are to be pitied, who, if they are some times happy in the Lord, can at other times be happy without him, and rejoice in broken cisterns, when their spirits are at a distance from the fountain of living waters. I do not plead for an absolute indifference to temporal blessings: he gives us all things richly to enjoy, and a capacity of relishing them is his gift likewise; but then the consideration of his love in bestowing should exceedingly enhance the value, and a regard to his will should regulate their use. Nor can they all supply the want of that which we can only receive immediately from himself. This principle likewise moderates that inordinate fear and sorrow to which we are liable upon the prospect or the occurrence of great trials for which there is a sure support and resource provided in the all-sufficiency of infinite goodness and grace. What a privilege is this, to possess God in all things while we have them, and all things in God when they are taken from us!

An acquiescence in the Lord's will, founded in a persuasion of his wisdom, holiness, sovereignty, and goodness. This is one of the greatest privileges and brightest ornaments of our profession. So far as we attain to this, we are secure from disappointment. Our own limited views and short-sighted purposes and desires, may be, and will be often over-ruled, but then our main and leading desire, that the will of the Lord may be done, must be accomplished. How highly does it become us, both as creatures and as sinners, to submit to the appointments of our Maker! and how necessary is it to our peace! This great attainment is too often unthought of, and overlooked; we are prone to fix our attention upon the second causes and immediate instruments of events; forgetting that whatever befals us is according to his purpose, and therefore must be right and seasonable in itself, and shall, in the issue, be productive of good. From hence arise impatience, resentment, and secret repinings, which are not only sinful, but tormenting; whereas, if all things are in his hand; if the very hairs of our head are numbered; if every event, great and small, is under the direction of his providence and purpose; and, if he has a wise, holy, and gracious end in view, to which every thing that happens is subordinate and subservient;—then we have nothing to do but, with patience and humility, to follow as he leads, and cheerfully to expect a happy issue. The path of present duty is marked out; and the concerns of the next and every succeeding hour are in his hands. How happy are they who can resign all to him, see his hand in every dispensation, and believe that he chuses better for them than they possibly could for themselves!

A single eye to his glory, as the ultimate scope of all our undertakings. The Lord can design nothing short of his own glory; nor should we. The constraining love of Christ has a direct and marvellous tendency, in proportion to the measure of faith, to mortify the corrupt principle, self, which, for a season, is the grand spring of our conduct, and by which we are too much biassed after we know the Lord. But as grace prevails, self is renounced. We feel that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price; and that it is our duty, our honour, and our happiness, to be the servants of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. To devote soul and body, every talent, power, and faculty, to the service of his cause and will; to let our light shine (in our several situations) to the praise of his grace; to place our highest joy in the contemplation of his adorable perfections; to rejoice even in tribulations and distresses, in reproaches and infirmities, if thereby the power of Christ may rest upon us, and be magnified in us; to be content, yea, glad to be nothing, that he may be all in all; to obey him, in opposition to the threats or solicitations of men; to trust him, though all outward appearances seem against us; to rejoice in him, though we should (as will sooner or later be the case) have nothing else to rejoice in; to live above the world, and to have our conversation in heaven, to be like the angels, finding our own pleasure in performing his. This, my Lord, is the prize, the mark of our high calling, to which we are encouraged, with a holy ambition, continually to aspire. It is true, we shall still fall short; we shall find, that when we would do good, evil will be present with us. But the attempt is glorious, and shall not be wholly in vain. He that gives us thus to will, will enable us to perform with growing success, and teach us to profit even by our mistakes and imperfections.

O blessed man! that thus fears the Lord, that delights in his word, and derives his principles, motives, maxims, and consolations, from that unfailing source of light and strength! He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf is always green, and fruit abundant. The wisdom that is above shall direct his plans, inspire his counsels; and the power of God shall guard him on every side, and prepare his way through every difficulty he shall see mountains sink into plains, and streams spring up in the dry wilderness. The Lord's enemies will be his; and they may be permitted to fight against him, but they shall not prevail, for the Lord is with him to deliver him. The conduct of such a one, though in a narrow and retired sphere of life, is of more real excellence and importance, than the most splendid actions of kings and conquerors, which fill the annals of history, Prov. xvi. 32. And if the God whom he serves is pleased to place him in a more public light, his labours and cares will be amply compensated, by the superior opportunities afforded him of manifesting the power and reality of true religion, and promoting the good of mankind.

I hope I may say, that I desire to be thus entirely given up to the Lord; I am sure, I must say, that what I have written is far from being my actual experience. Alas! I might be condemned out of my own mouth, were the Lord strict to mark what is amiss. But, O the comfort! we are not under the law, but under grace. The gospel is a dispensation for sinners, and we have an advocate with the Father. There is the unshaken ground of hope; a reconciled Father, a prevailing advocate, a powerful shepherd, a compassionate friend, a Saviour, who is able and willing to save to the uttermost. He knows our frame; he remembers that we are but dust: and he has opened for us a new and blood-besprinkled way of access to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

April—1772.

MY LORD,

For five or six weeks past, I have been a good deal indisposed. The ground of my complaint was a cold, attended with a slight fever, and for some time with a cough, which made me feel some inconvenience in preaching. To this succeeded a deafness, so great as to cut me off from conversation; for I could not hear the sound of a voice, unless it was spoken loud in my ear. But the Lord has mercifully removed the fever and cough, opened my ears, and I am now nearly as well as usual. I had cause to be thankful, especially for two things, under this dispensation: First, that I was enabled, though sometimes with a little difficulty, to go on with my public work. It is a singular favour I have to acknowledge, that for the space of almost nine years, since I have been in the ministry, our sabbath and weekly opportunities have not been once suspended; whereas I have seen many of the Lord's servants laid by for a considerable space within that time. My other great mercy was, that the Lord was pleased to preserve me in a peaceful resigned frame; so that, when I was deaf, and could not be certain that I should recover my hearing any more, I was in general as cheerful and easy as at other times. This was the effect of his goodness: for though I know enough of his sovereignty, wisdom, and faithfulness, of his right to do what he pleases, and the certainty that he does all things well, to furnish me with arguments enough to prove that submission to his will is our absolute duty; yet I am sensible, that when the trial actually comes, notwithstanding all the advice I may have offered to others, I should myself toss like a wild bull in a net; rebel and repine; forget that I am a sinner, and that he is a sovereign: this, I say, would always and invariably be the case, unless he was graciously pleased to fulfil his word, that strength shall be according to the day. I hope my deafness has been instructive to me. The exercise of our senses is so easily and constantly performed, that it seems a thing of course; but I was then reminded how precarious the tenure is by which we hold those blessings which seem most our own, and which e most immediately necessary to the comrtable enjoyment of life. Outward senses, ental faculties, health of body, and peace of ind, are extremely valuable; but the conmance of them for a single moment depends pon him, who, if he opens, none can shut, and when he shuts, none can open. A minute more than sufficient to deprive us of what hold most dear, or to prevent us from deving the least comfort from it, if it is not 'n away. I am not presuming to give your Lordship information; but only mentioning the thoughts that were much upon my mind while I was incapable of conversation. These are indeed plain and obvious truths, which I have long acknowledged as indisputable; but I have reason to be thankful when the Lord impresses them with fresh power upon my heart, even though he sees fit to do it through the medium of afflictions. I have seen, of late, something of the weight and importance of that admonition, Jer. ix. 23, 24; a passage which, though addressed to the wise, the mighty, and the rich, is of universal application; for self, unless corrected and mortified by grace, will find something whereof to glory, in the meanest characters and the lowest situations. And indeed, when things come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, the lunatics in bedlam, some of whom glory in their straw or their chains, as marks of splendour or ensigns of royalty, have as much reason on their side as any persons upon earth who glory in themselves. This alone is the proper ground of glory and joy, if we know the Lord. Then all is safe at present, and all will be happy for ever. Then, whatever changes may affect our temporal concernments, our best interests and hopes are secured beyond the reach of change; and whatever we may lose or suffer during this little span of time, will be abundantly compensated in that glorious state of eternity, which is just at hand.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

December—1772.

MY LORD,

I LATELY employed some of my leisure hours (which, when I am not indolent, are but few) in reading the Memoirs of the duke of Sully, which occasionally came in my way. It afforded me matter for variety of reflections. I pity the duke of Sully, whose attachment to the name of Protestant seems to have been little more than a point of honour, who drew all his resources from himself, and whose chief aim seems to have been, to approve himself faithful to an earthly master. He acted as well as could be expected from natural principles; and the Lord, who employed him as an instrument in his providence, rewarded his fidelity with success, honour, and riches: a reward which, though in itself a poor one, is suited to the desires of men who place their happiness in worldly things, and is so far a compensation of their services. It is given to your Lordship to act from nobler principles, and with more enlarged views. You serve a Master, of whose favour, protection, and assistance you cannot be deprived, who will not overlook or misconstrue the smallest services

you attempt for him, who will listen to no insinuations against you, who is always near, to comfort, direct, and strengthen you, and who is preparing for you such honours and blessings as he only can give, an inheritance (the reverse of all earthly good) ἀθλαφθον, καὶ ἀμιαντον, καὶ ἀμαραντον.* Thus animated, and thus supported, assisted likewise by the prayers of thousands, may we not warrantably hope that your Lordship will be an instrument of great good, and that both church and state will be benefited by your example, counsels, and care.

In another view, the duke of Sully's history exhibits a comment upon the psalmist's words, "Surely man in his best estate is altogether vanity." View him in one light, he seems to have possessed all that the most aspiring mind could aim at—the favour and confidence of his prince, accumulated wealth, great honours, and such powers by his offices and influence with the king, that he could almost do what he pleased. Yet he had so much to suffer from the fatigues and difficulties of his station, and the cabals and malice of his enemies, that, in the midst of all his grandeur, a dispassionate mind would rather pity than envy him. And how suddenly were his schemes broken by the death of the king? Then he lost his friend, his protector, his influence. The remainder of his days were embittered by many inquietudes. He lived indeed, if that could afford any consolation, in much state and pageantry afterwards; but after having toiled through more than fourscore years, died at last almost of a broken heart, from domestic uneasiness. And is this all that the world can do for those who are accounted most successful? Alas!

Too low they build who build below the skies.

And what a picture of the instability of human things have we in his master, Henry! Admired, beloved, dreaded, full of vast designs, fondly supposing himself born to be the arbiter of Europe, in an awful moment, and in the midst of his friends, suddenly struck from the height of his grandeur, and snatched into the invisible, unchangeable world. In that moment all his thoughts perished.

How unspeakably awful such a transition! How remarkable were his own forebodings of the approaching hour! O Lord, how dost thou pour contempt upon princes, and teach us that the great and the mean are equally in thy hands, and at thy disposal, as clay in the hands of the potter! Poor king! while he expected obedience to his own commands, he lived in habitual defiance of the commands of God. Men may respect his memory, for his sincerity, benevolence, and other amiable qualities; but, besides, that he was engrossed by a round of sensual pleasure (when business of state did not interfere), his life was stained with adultery. Happy, if, in the hours he spent in retirement, when the pre-intimation of his death hung heavy upon his mind, the Lord humbled and softened his heart, and gave him repentance unto life! I wish the history afforded a proof of this. However, in his death, we see an affecting proof, that no human dignity or power can ward off the stroke of the Almighty, who by such sudden and unexpected dispensations often shews himself terrible to the princes and great men of the earth. O! that they could see his hand, and wisely consider his doing in them!

But happy is the man who fears the Lord, and delights in his commandments: who sets God always before him, and acts under the constraining influence of redeeming love. He is the real friend, and the best champion of his country, who makes not the vague notions of human wisdom and honour, but the precepts and example of the blessed Jesus, the model and the motive of his conduct. He inculcates, as occasion offers, the great truths of religion in his conversation, and demonstrates them by his practice; yet the best part of his life is known only to God and himself. His time is divided between serving his country in public, and wrestling for it in private. Nor shall his labours or his prayers be lost. Either he shall have the desire of his heart, and shall see the religion and the liberty he so highly values transmitted to posterity; or, if he should live when wrath is decreed, and there is no remedy, the promise and the providence of God shall seal him as the peculiar charge of angels, in the midst of public calamity. And when all things are involved in confusion, when the hearts of the wicked shall shake like the leaves of the forest, he shall be kept in perfect peace, trusting in the Lord.

I am, with the greatest deference, &c.

* Incorruptible, undefiled, unfading

LETTER X.

March — 1773.

MY LORD,

USUALLY for some days before I purpose writing to your Lordship my thoughts are upon the stretch for a subject; I do not mean all day long, but it is so more or less: but I might as well spare my inquiries, I can come to no determination, and, for the most part, begin to write at an absolute uncertainty how I am to proceed. Since I cannot pre-meditate, my heart prays that it may be given me in the same hour what I shall offer. A simple dependence upon the teaching and influence of the good Spirit of God, so as not to supersede the use of appointed means, would, if it could be uniformly maintained, make

every part of duty easy and successful. It would free us from much solicitude, and prevent many mistakes. Methinks I have a subject in view already, a subject of great importance to myself, and which, perhaps, will not be displeasing to your Lordship, viz. how to walk with God in the daily occurrences of life, so as to do every thing for his sake and by his strength.

When we are justified by faith, and accepted in the Beloved, we become heirs of everlasting life: but we cannot know the full value of our privileges till we enter upon the state of glory. For this, most who are converted, have to wait some time after they are partakers of grace. Though the Lord loves them, hates sin, and teaches them to hate it, he appoints them to remain a while in a sinful world, and to groan under the burden of a depraved nature. He could put them in immediate possession of the heaven for which he has given them a meetness, but he does not. He has a service for them here, an honour which is worth all they can suffer, and for which eternity will not afford an opportunity, namely, to be instruments of promoting his designs, and manifesting his grace in the world. Strictly speaking, this is the whole of our business here, the only reason why life is prolonged, or for which it is truly desirable, that we may fill up our connections and situations, improve our comforts and our crosses, in such a manner as that God may be glorified in us and by us. As he is a bountiful Master and a kind Father, he is pleased to afford a variety of temporal blessings, which sweeten our service, and as coming from his hand are very valuable, but are by no means worth living for, considered in themselves, as they can neither satisfy our desires, nor preserve us from trouble or support us under it. That light of God's countenance which can pervade the walls and dissipate the gloom of a dungeon, is unspeakably preferable to all that can be enjoyed in a palace without it. The true end of life is, to live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us; and while we devote ourselves to his service upon earth, to rejoice in the prospect of being happy with him for ever in heaven. These things are generally known and acknowledged by professors; but they are a favoured few who act consistently with their avowed principles; who honestly, diligently, and without reserve, endeavour to make the most of their talents and strength in promoting the Lord's service, and allow themselves no views or designs, but what are plainly subordinate and subservient to it. Yea, I believe, the best of the Lord's servants see cause enough to confess, that they are not only unprofitable in comparison of what they wish to be, but in many instances unfaithful likewise. They find so many snares, hindrances, and temptations, arising from without, and so much embarrassment from sin which dwells within, that they have more cause for humiliation than self-complacence, when they seem most earnest and most useful. However, we have no scriptural evidence that we serve the Lord at all, any further than we find an habitual desire and aim to serve him wholly. He is gracious to our imperfections and weakness; yet he requires all the heart, and will not be served by halves, nor accept what is performed by a divided spirit. I lately met with some profane scoffs of Voltaire upon the sentiment of doing all to the glory of God (such as might be expected from such a man); however, this is the true alchymy which turns every thing to gold, and ennobles the common actions of life into acts of religion, 1 Cor. x 31. Nor is there a grain of real goodness in the most specious actions which are performed without a reference to God's glory. This the world cannot understand; but it will appear highly reasonable to those who take their ideas of God from the scriptures, and who have felt the necessity, and found the benefits of redemption. We are debtors many ways. The Lord has a right to us by creation, by redemption, by conquest, when he freed us from Satan's power, and took possession of our hearts by his grace; and lastly, by our own voluntary surrender in the day when he enabled us to fix our choice on himself, as our Lord and our portion. Then we felt the force of our obligations, we saw the beauty and honour of his service, and that nothing was worthy to stand in the least degree of competition with it. This is always equally true, though our perceptions of it are not always equally strong. But where it has been once really known, it cannot be wholly forgotten, or cease to be the governing principle of life; and the Lord has promised to revive the impression in those who wait upon him, and thereby to renew their strength. For in proportion as we feel by what ties we are his, we shall embrace his service as perfect freedom.

Again when the eye is thus single, the whole body will be full of light. The principle, of acting simply for God, will in general make the path of duty plain, solve a thousand otherwise dubious questions, lead to the most proper and obvious means, and preclude that painful anxiety about events, which upon no other plan can be avoided. The love of God is the best casuist; especially as it leads us to a careful attendance to his precepts, a reliance on his promises, and a submission to his will. Most of our perplexities arise from an undue, though perhaps unperceived, attachment to self. Either we have some scheme of our own too closely connected with our general view of serving the Lord, or lay some stress upon our own management, which, though we suspect it may possibly fail us, we cannot entirely help trusting to. In these respects, the Lord permits his servants occasionally to feel their own weakness; but if they are

sincerely devoted to him, he will teach them to profit by it, and bring them by degrees to a simplicity of dependence, as well as of intention. Then all things are easy. Acting from love, and walking by faith, they can neither be disappointed nor discouraged. Duty is their part, care is his, and they are enabled to cast it upon him. They know that when their expedients seem to fail, he is still all-sufficient. They know that, being engaged in his cause they cannot miscarry; and that though in some things they may seem to fall short of success, they are sure of meeting acceptance, and that he will estimate their services, not by their actual effects, but according to the gracious principle and desire he has put into their hearts, 2 Chron. vi. 7. 8.

I am, with the greatest respect, &c.

LETTER XI.

June—1773.

MY LORD,

My old cast-off acquaintance, Horace, occasionally came in my way this morning. I opened it upon *lib.* 3. *od.* 29. Did I not know the proposal to be utterly impracticable, how gladly should I imitate it, and send your Lordship, in honest prose, if not in elegant verse, an invitation. But I must content myself with the idea of the pleasure it would give me to sit with you half a day under my favourite great tree, and converse with you, not concerning the comparatively petty affairs of human governments, but of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. How many delightful subjects would suggest themselves in a free and retired conversation! The excellency of our King, the permanency and glory of his kindom, the beauty of his administration, the privileges of his subjects, the review of what he has done for us, and the prospect of what he has prepared for us in future; and if, while we were conversing, he should be pleased to join us (as he did the disciples when walking to Emmaus), how would our hearts burn within us! Indeed, whether we are alone, or in company, the most interesting topics strike us but faintly, unless he is pleased to afford his gracious influence; but when he is present, light, love, liberty, and joy, spring up in the hearts that know him. This reminds me (as I have mentioned Horace) to restore some beautiful lines to their proper application. They are impious and idolatrous as he uses them, but have an expressive propriety in the mouth of a believer:—

> Lucem redde tuæ, dux bone, patriæ:
> Instar veris enim vultus ubi tuus
> Affulsit populo, gratior it dies,
> Et soles melius nitent.

But we cannot meet. All that is left for me is to use the liberty you allow me of offering a few hints upon these subjects by letter, not because you know them not, but because you love them. The hour is coming when all impediments shall be removed. All distinctions shall cease that are founded upon sublunary things, and the earth and all its works shall be burnt up. Glorious day! May our souls be filled with the thought, and learn to estimate all things around us now by the view in which they will appear to us then! Then it will be of small moment who was the prince and who was the beggar in this life, but who, in their several situations, sought, and loved, and feared, and honoured the Lord. Alas! how many of the kings of the earth, and the rich men and the chief captains, and the mighty men will then say, in vain, to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us!" In this world they are for the most part too busy to regard the commands of God, or too happy to seek his favour: they have their good things here; they please themselves for a while, and in a moment they go down to the grave. In that moment their thoughts perish, their schemes are left unfinished, they are torn from their possessions, and enter upon a new, an untried, an unchangeable, a never-ending state of existence. Alas! is this all the world can afford! I congratulate you, my Lord, not because God has appointed you to appear in an elevated rank (this, abstracted from the opportunity it affords you of greater usefulness, would perhaps be a more proper subject for condolence); but that he has admitted you to those honours and privileges which come from him only, and which so few in the superior ranks of life think worthy of their attention. I doubt not but you are often affected with a sense of this distinguishing mercy. But though we know that we are debtors, great debtors to the grace of God, which alone has made us to differ, we know it but imperfectly at present. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, nor can we form a just conception of the misery from which we are redeemed, much less of the price paid for our redemption. How little do we know of the Redeemer's dignity, and of the unutterable distress he endured when his soul was made an offering for sin, and it pleased the Father to bruise him, that by his stripes we might be healed. These things will strike us quite in another manner, when we view them in the light of eternity. Then, to return to the thought from which I have rambled, then and there I trust we shall meet to the highest advantage, and spend an everlasting day together in happiness and praise. With this thought I endeavour to comfort myself, under the regret I sometimes feel that I can have so little intercourse with you in this life.

May the cheering contemplation of the hope set before us, support and animate us to improve the interval and fill us with a holy am-

bition of shining as lights in the world, to the praise and glory of his grace who has called us out of darkness. Encompassed as we are with snares, temptations, and infirmities, it is possible, by his promised assistance, to live in some good measure above the world while we are in it; above the influence of its cares, its smiles, or its frowns. Our conversation, πολίτευμα, our citizenship, is in heaven. We are not at home, but only resident here for a season, to fulfil an appointed service; and the Lord, whom we serve, has encouraged us to hope that he will guide us by his wisdom, strengthen us by his power, and comfort us with the light of his countenance, which is better than life. Every blessing we receive from him is a token of his favour, and a pledge of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which he has reserved for us. O! to hear him say at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" will be a rich amends for all that we can lose, suffer, or forbear, for his sake.

I subscribe myself, with great sincerity, &c.

LETTER XII.

February — 1774.

MY LORD,

THE first line of Horace's epistle to Augustus, when rightly applied, suggests a grand and cheering idea. As addressed by the poet, nothing can be more blasphemous, idolatrous, and absurd; but with what comfort and propriety may a christian look up to him to whom all power is committed in heaven and earth, and say, *Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus!* Surely a more weighty and comprehensive sentence never dropped from an uninspired pen. And how beautifully and expressively is it closed by the word *solus!* the government is upon his shoulders: and though he is concealed by a veil of second causes from common eyes, so that they can perceive only the means, instruments, and contingencies by which he works, and therefore think he does nothing, yet in reality he does all, according to his own counsel and pleasure, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

Who can enumerate the *tot et tanta negotia*, which are incessantly before his eye, assisted by his wisdom, dependent on his will, and regulated by his power, in his kingdoms of providence and grace? If we consider the heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars which he has ordained; if we call in the assistance of astronomers and glasses, to help us in forming a conception of the number, distances, magnitudes, and motions of the heavenly bodies; the more we search, the more we shall be confirmed, that these are but a portion of his ways. But he calls them all by their names, upholds them by his power, and without his continual energy they would rush into confusion, or sink into nothing. If we speak of intelligences, he is the life, the joy, the sun of all that are capable of happiness. Whatever may be signified by the thrones, principalities, and powers in the world of light, they are all dependent upon his power, and obedient to his command; it is equally true of angels as of men, that without him they can do nothing. The powers of darkness are likewise under his subjection and controul. Though but little is said of them in scripture, we read enough to assure us that their number must be immensely great, and that their strength, subtilty, and malice, are such, as we may tremble to think of them as our enemies, and probably should, but for our strange insensibility to whatever does not fall under the cognizance of our outward senses. But he holds them all in a chain, so that they can do or attempt nothing but by his permission; and whatever he permits them to do (though they mean nothing less) has its appointed subserviency in accomplishing his designs.

But to come nearer home, and to speak of what seems more suited to our scanty apprehensions; still we may be lost in wonder. Before this blessed and only Potentate, all the nations of the earth are but as the dust upon the balance and the small drop of a bucket, and might be thought (if compared with the immensity of his works) scarcely worthy of his notice; yet here he presides, pervades, provides, protects, and rules. In him his creatures live, move, and have their being; from him is their food and preservation. The eyes of all are upon him; what he gives they gather, and can gather no more; and at his word they sink into the dust. There is not a worm that crawls upon the ground, or a flower that grows in the pathless wilderness, or a shell upon the sea-shore, but bears the impress of his wisdom, power, and goodness. With respect to men, he reigns with uncontrouled dominion over every kingdom, family, and individual. Here we may be astonished at his wisdom, in employing free agents, the greater part of whom are his enemies, to accomplish his purposes. But, however reluctant, they all serve him. His patience, likewise, is wonderful. Multitudes, yea nearly our whole species, spend the life and strength which he affords them, and abuse all the bounties he heaps upon them, in the ways of sin. His commands are disregarded, his name blasphemed, his mercy disdained, his power defied; yet still he spares. It is an eminent part of his government, to restrain the depravity of human nature, and in various ways to check its efforts which, if, left to itself, without his providential controul, would presently make earth the very image of

hell. For the vilest men are not suffered to perpetrate a thousandth part of the evil which their hearts would prompt them to. The earth, though lying in the wicked one, is filled with the goodness of the Lord. He preserveth man and beast, sustains the young lions in the forest, feeds the birds of the air, which have neither store-house nor barn, and adorns the insects and the flowers of the field with a beauty and elegance, far beyond what can be found in the courts of kings.

Still more wonderful is his administration in his kingdom of grace. He is present with all his creatures, but in a peculiar manner with his own people. Each of these are monuments of a more illustrious display of power, than that which spread abroad the heavens like a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth; for he finds them all in a state of rebellion and enmity, and makes them a willing people; and from the moment he reveals his love to them, he espouses their cause, and takes all their concerns into his own hands. He is near and attentive to every one of them, as if there was only that one. This high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, before whom the angels vail their faces, condescends to hold communion with those whom men despise. He sees not as man seeth—rides on a cloud, disdainful by a sultan or a czar, to manifest himself to an humble soul in a mud-walled cottage. He comforts them when in trouble, strengthens them when weak, makes their beds in sickness, revives them when fainting, upholds them when failing, and so seasonably and effectually manages for them, that though they are persecuted and tempted, though their enemies are many and mighty, nothing that they feel or fear is able to separate them from his love.

And all this he does *solus*. All the abilities, powers, and instincts, that are found amongst creatures, are emanations from his fulness. All changes, successes, disappointments, all that is memorable in the annals of history, all the risings and falls of empires, all the turns in human life, take place according to his plan. In vain men contrive and combine to accomplish their own counsels; unless they are parts of his counsel likewise, the efforts of their utmost strength and wisdom are crossed and reversed by the feeblest and most unthought-of circumstances. But when he has a work to accomplish, and his time is come, however inadequate and weak the means he employs may seem to a carnal eye, the success is infallibly secured; for all things serve him, and are in his hands as clay in the hands of the potter. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!

This is the God whom we adore. This is he who invites us to lean upon his almighty arm, and promises to guide us with his unerring eye. He says to you, my Lord, and even to me, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed. I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Therefore, while in the path of duty, and following his call, we may cheerfully pass on, regardless of apparent difficulties; for the Lord, whose we are, and who has taught us to make his glory our highest end, will go before us, and at his word crooked things become straight, light shines out of darkness, and mountains sink into plains. Faith may, and must be exercised, experience must, and will confirm what his word declares, that the heart is deceitful, and that man in his best estate is vanity. But his promises to them that fear him shall be confirmed likewise, and they shall find him, in all situations, a sun, a shield, and an exceeding great reward.

I have lost another of my people, a mother unto our Israel; a person of much experience, eminent grace, wisdom, and usefulness. She walked with God forty years: she was one of the Lord's poor; but her poverty was decent, satisfied, and honourable; she lived respected, and her death is considered as a public loss. It is a great loss to me; I shall miss her advice and example, by which I have been often edified and animated. But Jesus still lives. Almost her last words were, The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

March 10, 1774.

MY LORD,

FOR about six weeks past I have had occasion to spend several hours of almost every day with the sick and the dying. These scenes are to a minister like walking the hospitals to a young surgeon. The various cases which occur, exemplify, illustrate, and explain, with a commanding energy, many truths, which may be learned indeed at home, but cannot be so well understood, or their force so sensibly felt, without the advantage of experience and observation. As physicians, besides that competent general knowledge of their profession which should be common to them all, have usually their several favourite branches of study, some applying themselves more to botany, others to chemistry, others to anatomy; so ministers as their inclinations and gifts differ, are led more closely to consider some particular branch of the system of divine truth. Some are directed to state and defend the doctrines of the gospel; some have a talent for elucidating difficult texts of scripture: some have a turn for explaining the

prophetical parts, and so of the rest. For myself, if it be lawful to speak of myself, and so far as I can judge, anatomy is my favourite branch; I mean the study of the human heart, with its workings and counter-workings, as it is differently affected in a state of nature or of grace in the different seasons of prosperity, adversity, conviction, temptation, sickness, and the approach of death. The Lord, by sending me hither, provided me a good school for these purposes. I know not where I could have had a better, or one affording a greater variety of characters, in proportion to the number of people; and as they are mostly poor people, and strangers to that address which is the result of education and converse with the world, there is a simplicity in what they say or do, which gives me a peculiar advantage in judging of their cases.

But I was about to speak of death. Though the grand evidence of those truths upon which our hopes are built, arises from the authority of God speaking them in his word, and revealing them by his Spirit, to the awakened heart (for till the heart is awakened it is incapable of receiving this evidence); yet some of these truths are so mysterious, so utterly repugnant to the judgment of depraved nature, that, through the remaining influence of unbelief and vain reasoning, the temptations of Satan, and the subtle arguments with which some men reputed wise, attack the foundations of our faith, the minds even of believers are sometimes capable of being shaken. I know no better corroborating evidence for the relief of the mind under such assaults than the testimony of dying persons, especially of such as have lived out of the noise of controversy, and who perhaps never heard a syllable of what has been started in these evil days against the deity of Christ, his atonement, and other important articles. Permit me, my Lord, to relate, upon this occasion, some things which exceedingly struck me in the conversation I had with a young woman whom I visited in her last illness about two years ago. She was a sober, prudent person, of plain sense, could read her Bible, but had read little besides. Her knowledge of the world was nearly confined to the parish; for I suppose she was seldom, if ever, twelve miles from home in her life. She had known the gospel about seven years before the Lord visited her with a lingering consumption, which at length removed her to a better world. A few days before her death, I had been praying by her bed-side, and in my prayer, I asked the Lord, that he gave her now to see that she had not followed cunningly-devised fables. When I had finished, she repeated that word, "No," she said "not cunningly-devised fables; these are realities indeed: I feel their truth, I feel their comfort. I tell my friends, tell my acquaintance, tell inquiring souls, tell poor sinners, tell all the daughters of Jerusalem (alluding to Solomon's Song, v. 16. from which she had just before desired me to preach at her funeral), what Jesus has done for my soul. Tell them that now in the time of need I find him my beloved and my friend, and as such I commend him to them." She then fixed her eyes steadfastly upon me, and proceeded, as well as I can recollect, as follows: "Sir, you are highly favoured in being called to preach the gospel. I have often heard you with pleasure; but give me leave to tell you, that I now see all you have said, or can say, is comparatively but little. Nor till you come into my situation, and have death and eternity full in your view, will it be possible for you to conceive the vast weight and importance of the truths you declare. Oh! Sir, it is a serious thing to die; no words can express what is needful to support the soul in the solemnity of a dying hour."

I believe it was the next day when I visited her again. After some discourse, as usual, she said, with a remarkable vehemence of speech, "Are you sure I cannot be mistaken?" I answered, without hesitation, Yes, I am sure; I am not afraid to say, my soul for your's that you are right. She paused a little, and then replied, "You say true, I know I am right. I feel that my hope is fixed upon the Rock of ages; I know in whom I have believed. Yet if you could see with my eyes, you would not wonder at my question. But the approach of death presents a prospect, which is till then hidden from us, and which cannot be described." She said much more to the same purpose; and in all she spoke there was a dignity, weight, and evidence which I suppose few professors of divinity, when lecturing from the chair, have at any time equalled. We may well say, with Elihu, "Who teacheth like him?" Many instances of the like kind I have met with here I have a poor girl near me who looks like an idiot, and her natural capacity is indeed very small, but the Lord has been pleased to make her acquainted alternately with great temptations and proportionably great discoveries of his love and truth. Sometimes, when her heart is enlarged, I listen to her with astonishment. I think no books or ministers I ever met with have given me such an impression and understanding of what the apostle styles τα βαθη του Θεου,* as I have upon some occasions received from her conversation.

But I am rambling again. My attendance upon the sick is not always equally comfortable, but, could I learn aright, it might be equally instructive. Some confirm the preciousness of a Saviour to me, by the cheerfulness with which, through faith in his name, they meet the king of terrors. Others no less confirm it, by the terror and reluctance they

* The deep things of God.

discover when they find they must die; for though there are too many who sadly slight the blessed gospel while they are in health, yet in this place most are too far enlightened to be quite thoughtless about their souls, if they retain their senses in their last illness. Then, like the foolish virgins, they say, "Give us of your oil." Then they are willing that ministers and professors should pray with them and speak to them. Through the Lord's goodness, several whom I have visited in these circumstances have afforded me good hope; they have been savingly changed by his blessing upon what has passed at the eleventh hour. I have seen a marvellous and blessed change take place in their language, views, and tempers, in a few days. I now visit a young person, who is cut short in her nineteenth year by a consumption, and I think cannot live many days. I found her very ignorant and insensible, and she remained so a good while; but of late I hope her heart is touched. She feels her lost state, she seems to have some right desires, she begins to pray, and in such a manner as I cannot but hope the Lord is teaching her, and will reveal himself to her before she departs. But it is sometimes otherwise. I saw a young woman die last week: I had been often with her; but the night she was removed she could only say, "O, I cannot live, I cannot live!" She repeated this mournful complaint as long as she could speak; for, as the vital powers were more oppressed, her voice was changed into groans; her groans grew fainter and fainter, and, in about a quarter of an hour after she had done speaking, she expired. Poor thing, I thought, as I stood by her bed-side, if you were a duchess, in this situation, what could the world do for you now! I thought likewise how many things are there that now give us pleasure or pain, and assume a mighty importance in our view, which, in a dying hour, will be no more to us than the clouds which fly unnoticed over our heads. Then the truth of our Lord's aphorism will be seen, felt, and acknowledged, "One thing is needful;" and we shall be ready to apply Grotius's dying confession, to, alas! a great part of our lives! *Ah vitam perdidi, nihil agendo laboriose.**

Your Lordship allows me to send unpremeditated letters. I need not assure you this is one.

I am, &c.

* I have lost a life in laborious trifling.

LETTER XIV.

March 24, 1774.

MY LORD,

WHAT a mercy is it to be separated in spirit, conversation, and interest from the world that knows not God! where all are alike by nature. Grace makes a happy and unspeakable difference. Believers were once under the same influence of that spirit who still worketh in the children of disobedience, pursuing different paths, but all equally remote from truth and peace; some hatching cockatrice eggs, others weaving spiders webs. These two general heads of mischief and vanity include all the schemes, aims, and atchievements of which man is capable, till God is pleased to visit the heart with his grace. The busy part of mankind are employed in multiplying evils and miseries; the more retired, speculative, and curious are amusing themselves with what will hereafter appear as unsubstantial, unstable, and useless as a cobweb. Death will soon sweep away all that the philosophers, the virtuosi, the mathematicians, the antiquarians, and other learned triflers are now weaving with so much self-applauded address. Nor will the fine-spun dresses in which the moralist and the self-righteous clothe themselves, be of more advantage to them, either for ornament or defence, than the produce of a spider. But it is given to a few to know their present state and future destination. These build upon the immoveable rock of ages for eternity. These are trees springing from a living root, and bear the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. These only are awake, while the rest of the world are in a sleep, indulging in vain dreams, from which likewise they will shortly awake; but, O, with what consternation, when they shall find themselves irrecoverably divorced from all their delusive attachments, and compelled to appear before that God to whom they have lived strangers, and to whom they must give an account! O for a thousand tongues to proclaim in the ears of thoughtless mortals that important aphorism of our Lord, "One thing is needful!" Yet a thousand tongues would be, and are employed in vain, unless so far as the Lord is pleased to send the watchman's warning, by the power and agency of his own Spirit. I think the poet tells us, that Cassandra had the gift of truly foretelling future events; but she was afterwards laid under a painful embarrassment, that nobody should believe her words. Such, with respect to the bulk of their auditories, is the lot of gospel-ministers: they are enlightened to see, and sent forth to declare, the awful consequences of sin; but, alas! how few believe their report! To illustrate our grief and disappointment, I

sometimes suppose a dangerous water to be in the way of travellers, over which there is a bridge, which those who can be prevailed upon may pass with safety. By the side of this bridge watchmen are placed, to warn passengers of the danger of the waters; to assure them, that all who attempt to go through them must invevitably perish; to invite, entreat, and beseech them, if they value their lives, to cross the bridge. Methinks this should be an easy task: yet if we should see in fact the greater part stopping their ears to the friendly importunity; many so much offended by it, as to account the watchman's care impertinent, and only deserving of scorn and ill treatment; hardly one in fifty betaking themselves to the friendly bridge, the rest eagerly plunging into the waters, from which none return, as if they were determined to try who should be drowned first. This spectacle would be no unfit emblem of the reception the gospel meets with from a blinded world. The ministers are rejected, opposed, vilified; they are accounted troublers of the world, because they dare not, cannot stand silent, while sinners are perishing before their eyes: and if, in the course of many sermons, they can prevail but on one soul to take timely warning, and to seek to Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, they may account it a mercy and an honour, sufficient to overbalance all the labour and reproaches they are called to endure. From the most they must expect no better reception than the Jews gave to Jeremiah, who told the prophet to his face, "As to the word thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee at all; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." Surely, if the Lord has given us any sense of the worth of our souls, any compassion towards them, this must be a painful exercise; and experience must teach us something of the meaning of Jeremiah's pathetic exclamation, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears! that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people." It is our duty to be thus affected. Our relief lies in the wisdom and sovereignty of God. He reveals his salvation to whom he pleases, for the most part to babes; from the bulk of the wise and the prudent it is hidden. Thus it hath pleased him, and therefore it must be right. Yea, he will one day condescend to justify the propriety and equity of proceedings to his creatures: then every uth will be stopped, and none will be able eply against his judge. Light is come into world, but men prefer darkness. They e the light, resist it, and rebel against it. true, all do so; and therefore, if all were erish under the condemnation, their ruin ld be their own act. It is of grace that are saved, and in the distribution of that e, he does what he will with his own; a right which most are ready enough to claim in their own concerns, though they are so unwilling to allow it to the Lord of all. Many perplexing and acrimonious disputes have been started upon this subject; but the redeemed of the Lord are called, not to dispute, but to admire and rejoice; to love, adore, and obey. To know that he loved us, and gave himself for us, is the constraining argument and motive to love him, and surrender ourselves to him; to consider ourselves as no longer our own, but to devote ourselves, with every faculty, power, and talent to his service and glory. He deserves our all; for he parted with all for us. He made himself poor; he endured shame, torture, death, and the curse for us, that we, through him, might inherit everlasting life. Ah! the hardness of my heart, that I am no more affected, astonished, overpowered, with this thought!

I am, &c.

LETTER XV.

April 20, 1774.

MY LORD,

I HAVE been pondering a good while for a subject, and at last I be in without one, hoping that, as it has often happened, while I am writing one line, something will occur to fill up another. Indeed, I have an inexhaustible fund at hand; but it is to me often like a prize in the hand of a fool; I want skill to improve it. O for a warm, a suitable, a seasonable train of thought, that might enliven my own heart, and not be unworthy your Lordship's perusal! Methinks the poets can have but cold comfort, when they invocate a fabled Muse; but we have a warrant, a right, to look up for the influence of the Holy Spirit, who ordains strength for us, and has promised to work in us. What a comfort, what an honour is this, that worms have liberty to look up to God! and that He, the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity, is pleased to look down upon us, to maintain our peace, to supply our wants, to guide us with his eye, to inspire us with wisdom and grace suitable to our occasions! They who profess to know something of this intercourse, and to depend upon it, are by the world accounted enthusiasts, who know not what they mean, or perhaps hypocrites, who pretend to what they have not, in order to cover some base designs. But we have reason to bear their reproaches with patience. Could the miser say,

———Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arca.

Well, then, may the believer say, let them laugh, let them rage, let them, if they please, point at me for a fool, as I walk the streets; if I do but take up the *Bible*, or run over in

my mind the inventory of the blessings with which the Lord has enriched me, I have sufficient amends. Jesus is mine; in him I have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, an interest in all the promises, and in all the perfections of God; he will guide me by his counsel, support me by his power, comfort me with his presence, while I am here, and afterwards, when flesh and heart fail, he will receive me to his glory.

Let them say what they will, they shall not dispute or laugh us out of our spiritual senses. If all the blind men in the kingdom should endeavour to bear me down, that the sun is not bright, or that the rainbow has no colours, I would still believe my own eyes. I have seen them both, they have not. I cannot prove to their satisfaction what I assert, because they are destitute of sight, the necessary medium; yet their exceptions produce no uncertainty in my mind; they would not, they could not hesitate a moment, if they were not blind. Just so, they who have been taught of God, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have an experimental perception of the truth, which renders them proof against all the sophistry of infidels. I am persuaded we have many plain people here, who, if a wise man of the world was to suggest that the Bible is a human invention, would be quite at a loss how to answer him, by arguments drawn from external evidences; yet they have found such effects from this blessed book, that they would be no more moved by the insinuation, than if they were told, that a cunning man, or set of men, invented the sun, and placed it in the firmament. So if a wise Socinian was to tell them, that the Saviour was only a man like themselves, they would conceive just such an opinion of his skill in divinity, as a philosopher would do of a clown's skill in astronomy, who should affirm that the sun was no bigger than a cart-wheel.

It remains therefore a truth, in defiance of all the cavils of the ignorant, that the Holy Spirit does influence the hearts of all the children of God, or, in other words, they are inspired, not with new revelations, but with grace and wisdom to understand, apply, and feed upon the great things already revealed in the scriptures, without which the scriptures are as useless as spectacles to the blind. Were it not so, when we become acquainted with the poverty, ignorance, and wickedness of our hearts, we must sit down in utter despair of being ever able to think a good thought, to offer a single petition aright in prayer, or to take one safe step in the path of life. But now we may be content with our proper weakness, since the power and spirit of Christ are engaged to rest upon us; and while we are preserved in a simple dependence upon this help, though unable of ourselves to do any thing, we shall find an ability to do every thing that our circumstances and duty call for. What is weaker than a worm? Yet the Lord's worms shall in his strength, thrash the mountains, and make the hills as chaff. But this life of faith, this living and acting by a power above our own, is an inexplicable mystery, till experience makes it plain. I have often wondered that St. Paul has obtained so much quarter at the hands of some people, as to pass with them for a man of sense; for surely the greatest part of his writings must be to the last degree absurd and unintelligible upon their principles. How many contradictions must they find, for instance, if they give any attention to what they read in that one passage, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

And as believers are thus inspired by the Holy Spirit, who furnishes them with desires, motives, and abilities, to perform what is agreeable to his will; so I apprehend, that they who live without God in the world, whom the apostle styles sensual, not having the Spirit, are in a greater or less degree *ad captum recipientis*, under what I may call a *black inspiration*. After making the best allowances I can, both for the extent of human genius and the deplorable evil of the human heart, I cannot suppose that one half of the wicked wit, of which some persons are so proud, is properly their own. Perhaps such a one as Voltaire would neither have written, nor have been read or admired so much, if he had not been the amanuensis of an abler hand in his own way. Satan is always near when the heart is disposed to receive him; and the Lord withdraws his restraints, to heighten the sinner's ability of sinning with an eclat, and assisting him with such strokes of blasphemy, malice, and falsehood, as perhaps he could not otherwise have attained. Therefore, I do not wonder that they are clever and smart, that they raise a laugh, and are received with applause among those who are like-minded with themselves. But unless the Lord is pleased to grant them repentance though it is rather to be feared some of them are given up to judicial hardness of heart, how much better would it have been for them, had they been born idiots or lunatics, than to be distinguished as the willing, industrious, and successful instruments of the powers of darkness, in beguiling, perverting, and ruining the souls of men! Alas, what are parts and talents, or any distinctions which give pre-eminence in life, unless they are sanctified by the grace of God, and directed to the accomplishment of his will and glory! From the expression, "Bind them in bundles, and burn them," I have been led to think, that the deceivers and the deceived, they who have prostituted their gifts or in-

fluence to encourage others in sin, and they who have perished by their means, may in another world have some peculiar and inseparable connection, and spend an eternity in fruitless lamentation that ever they were connected here.

Your Lordship, I doubt not feels the force of that line,

O, to grace how great a debtor!——

Had not the Lord separated you for himself, your rank, your abilities, your influence, which now you chiefly value as enlarging your opportunities of usefulness, might, nay certainly would, have been diverted into the opposite channel.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVI.

November 5, 1774.

MY LORD,

I HAVE not very lately had recourse to the expedient of descanting upon a text, but I believe it the best method I can take to avoid ringing changes upon a few obvious topics, which I suppose uniformly present themselves to my mind when I am about to write to your Lordship. Just now, that sweet expression of David occurred to my thoughts, "The Lord is my shepherd." Permit me, without plan or premeditation, to make a few observations upon it; and may your Lordship feel the peace, the confidence, the blessedness, which a believing application of the words is suited to inspire.

The Socinians, and others, in their unhappy laboured attempts to darken the principal glory and foundation-comfort of the gospel, employ their critical sophistry against those texts which expressly and doctrinally declare the Redeemer's character, and affect to triumph, if in any manuscript or ancient version they can find a variation from the received copies which seems to favour their cause. But we may venture to wave the authority of every disputed or disputable text, and maintain the truth against their cavils from the current language and tenor of the whole scripture. David's words, in Psal. xxiii, are alone a decisive proof that Jesus is Jehovah, if they will but allow two things, which I think they cannot deny:—1. That our Saviour assumes to himself the character of the Shepherd of his people;—and, 2. That he did not come into the world to abridge those advantages which the servants of God enjoyed before his incarnation. Upon these premises, which cannot be gainsaid without setting aside the whole New Testament, the conclusion is unanswerable: for if Jehovah was David's Shepherd, unless Jesus be Jehovah, we who live under the gospel have an unspeakable disadvantage, in being entrusted to the care of one who, according to the Socinians, is a mere man; and, upon the Arian scheme, is at the most a creature, and infinitely short of possessing those perfections which David contemplated in his Shepherd. He had a Shepherd whose wisdom and power were infinite, and might therefore warrantably conclude he should not want, and need not fear. And we also may conclude the same, if our Shepherd be the Lord or Jehovah, but not otherwise. Besides, the very nature of the Shepherd's office respecting the state of such frail creatures as we are, requires those attributes for the due discharge of it which are incommunicably divine. He must intimately know every individual of the flock: his eye must be upon them every one, and his ear open to their prayers, and his arm stretched out for their relief, in all places and in all ages: every thought of every heart must be open to his view, and his wisdom must penetrate, and his arm controul and over-rule, all the hidden and complicated machinations of the powers of darkness: he must have the administration of universal providence over all the nations, families, and persons upon earth, or he could not effectually manage for those who put their trust in him, in that immense variety of cases and circumstances in which they are found. Reason, as well as scripture, may convince us, that he who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, who healeth the broken in heart, who upholdeth all that fall, raiseth up all that are bowed down, and upon whom the eyes of all wait for their support, can be no other than he who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names, who is great in power, and whose understanding is infinite. To this purpose likewise the prophet Isaiah describes this mighty Shepherd, chap. xl. 9—17, both as to his person and office.

But is not this indeed the great mystery of godliness! How just is the apostle's observation, that no man can say Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost! How astonishing the thought,—that the Maker of heaven and earth, the Holy One of Israel, before whose presence the earth shook, the heavens dropped, when he displayed a faint emblem of his majesty upon Sinai, should afterwards appear in the form of a servant, and hang upon a cross, the sport and scorn of wicked men! I cannot wonder that to the wise men of the world this appears absurd, unreasonable, and impossible; yet to right reason, to reason enlightened, and sanctified, however amazing the proposition be, yet it appears true and necessary, upon a supposition that a holy God is pleased to pardon sinners in a way suited to display the awful glories of his justice. The same arguments which prove the blood of bulls and goats insufficient to take away sin, will conclude against the utmost doings or sufferings of men or angels. The Re-

deemer of sinners must be mighty; he must have a personal dignity, to stamp such a value upon his undertakings as that thereby God may appear just as well as merciful in justifying the ungodly for his sake; and he must be all-sufficient to bless, and almighty to protect those who come unto him for safety and life.

Such a one is our Shepherd. This is he of whom we, through grace, are enabled to say, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. We are his by every tie and right; he made us, he redeemed us, he reclaimed us from the hand of our enemies, and we are his by our own voluntary surrender of ourselves; for, though we once slighted, despised, and opposed him, he made us willing in the day of his power: he knocked at the door of our hearts; but we, at least I, barred and fastened it against him as much and as long as possible. But when he revealed his love we could stand out no longer. Like sheep, we are weak, destitute, defenceless, prone to wander, unable to return, and always surrounded with wolves. But all is made up in the fulness, ability, wisdom, compassion, care, and faithfulness of our great Shepherd. He guides, protects, feeds, heals, and restores, and will be our guide and our God even until death. Then he will meet us, receive us, and present us unto himself, and we shall be near him, and like him, and with him for ever.

Ah! my Lord, what a subject is this! I trust it is the joy of your heart. Placed as you are by his hand in a superior rank, you see and feel that the highest honours, and the most important concernments that terminate with the present life, are trivial as the sports of children in comparison with the views and the privileges you derive from the glorious gospel; and your situation in life renders the grace bestowed upon you the more conspicuous and distinguishing. I have somewhere met with a similar reflection of Henry IV. of France, to this purpose, that, though many came into the world the same day with him, he was probably the only one among them that was born to be a king. Your Lordship is acquainted with many, who, if not born on the same day with you, were born to titles, estates, and honours; but how few of them were born to the honour of making a public and consistent profession of the glorious gospel! The hour is coming, when all honours and possessions, but this which cometh of God only, will be eclipsed and vanish, and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind. How miserable will they then be who must leave their ALL! What a mortifying thought does Horace put in the way of those who disdain to read the scriptures!

Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens
Uxor: neque harum, quas colis, arborum
Te, præter invisas cupressos,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.

But grace and faith can make the lowest state of life supportable, and make a dismission from the highest desirable. Of the former I have many living proofs and witnesses around me. Your Lordship, I trust, will have sweet experience of the latter, when, after having fulfilled the will of God in your generation, you shall be called (I hope in some yet distant day) to enter into your Master's joy. In the meantime, how valuable are life, talents, influence, and opportunities of every kind, if we are enabled to improve and lay out all for him who hath thus loved us, thus provided for us? As to myself, I would hope there are few who have so clear a sense of their obligations to him, who make such unsuitable and languid returns as I do. I think I have a desire to serve him better; but, alas! evil is present with me. Surely I shall feel something like shame and regret for my coldness, even in heaven, for I find I am never happier than when I am most ashamed of myself upon this account here.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVII.

December 8, 1774.

MY LORD,

HOW wonderful is the patience of God towards sinful men! In him they live, and move, and have their being, and, if he were to withdraw his support for a single moment, they must perish. He maintains their lives, guards their persons, supplies their wants, while they employ the powers and faculties they receive from him in a settled course of opposition to his will. They trample upon his laws, affront his government, and despise his grace; yet still he spares. To silence all his adversaries in a moment would require no extraordinary exertion of his power; but his forbearance towards them manifests his glory, and gives us cause to say, Who is a God like unto thee?

Sometimes, however, there are striking instances of his displeasure against sin. When such events take place, immediately upon a public and premeditated contempt offered to Him that sitteth in the heavens, I own they remind me of the danger of standing, if I may so speak, in the Lord's way; for though his long-suffering is astonishing, and many dare him to his face daily, with seeming impunity, yet he sometimes strikes an awful and unexpected blow, and gives an illustration of that solemn word, "Who ever hardened himself against the Lord and prospered?" But how am I to make this observation? I ought to do it with the deepest humiliation, remembering that I once stood, according to my years and ability, in the foremost rank of his avowed opposers, and, with a

determined and unwearied enmity renounced, defied, and blasphemed him. "But he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy;" and therefore I was spared, and reserved to speak of his goodness.

Josephus, when speaking of the death of Herod Agrippa, ascribes it to a natural cause, and, says he was seized with excruciating pains in his bowels. But Luke informs us of the true cause: an angel of the Lord smote him. Had we a modern history, written by an inspired pen, we should probably often be reminded of such an interposition where we are not ordinarily aware of it. For though the springs of actions and events are concealed from us for the most part, and vain men carry on their schemes with confidence, as though the Lord had forsaken the earth, yet they are under his eye and controul; and faith, in some measure, instructed by the specimens of his government recorded in the scriptures, can trace and admire his hand, and can see how he takes the wise in their own craftiness, stains the pride of human glory; and that when sinners speak proudly, he is above them, and makes every thing bend or break before him.

While we lament the growth and pernicious effects of infidelity, and see how wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived; what gratitude should fill our hearts to him, who has been pleased to call us out of the horrid darkness in which multitudes are bewildered and lost, into the glorious light of his gospel! Faint are our warmest conceptions of this mercy. In order to understand it fully, we should have a full and adequate sense of the evil from which we are delivered; the glory to which we are called; and especially, of the astonishing means to which we owe our life and hope, the humiliation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God. But our views of these points, while in our present state, are and must be exceedingly weak and disproportionate. We know them but in part, we see them δι' ἐσόπτρου, by *reflection*, rather the images than the things themselves; and though they are faithfully represented in the mirror of God's word, to us they appear indistinct, because we see them through a gross medium of ignorance and unbelief. Hereafter every vail shall be removed; we shall know, in another manner than we do now, the unspeakable evil of sin, and the insupportable dreadfulness of God's displeasure against it, when we see the world in flames, and hear the final sentence denounced upon the ungodly. We shall have far other thoughts of Jesus when we see him as he is: and shall then be able to make a more affecting estimate of the love which moved him to be made a substitute and a curse for us: and we shall then know what great things God has prepared for them that love him. Then with transport, we shall adopt the queen of Sheba's language, It was a true report we heard in yonder dark world; but, behold, the half, the thousandth part, was not told us! In the mean time, may such conceptions as we are enabled to form of these great truths, fill our hearts, and be mingled with all our thoughts, and all our concerns; may the Lord, by faith, give us an abiding evidence of the reality and importance of the things which cannot yet be seen; so shall we be enabled to live above the world while we are in it, uninfluenced either by its blandishments or its frowns; and, with a noble simplicity and singularity, avow and maintain the cause of God in truth, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. He whom we serve is able to support and protect us; and he well deserves at our hands, that we should be willing to endure, for his sake, much more than he will ever permit us to be exercised with. The believer's call, duty, and privilege, is beautifully and forcibly set forth in Milton's character of Abdiel, at the end of the fifth book:

> ——Faithful found
> Among the faithless, faithful only he,
> Among innumerable false; unmov'd,
> Unshaken, unseduc'd, unterrified,
> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
> Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
> Though single——

Methinks your Lordship's situation particularly resembles that in which the poet has placed Abdiel. You are not, indeed, called to serve God quite alone; but amongst those of your own rank, and with whom, the station in which he has placed you, necessitates you to converse, how few are there who can understand, second, or approve, the principles upon which you act, or easily bear a conduct which must impress conviction, or reflect dishonour upon themselves! But you are not alone; the Lord's people (many of whom you will not know till you meet them in glory) are helping you here with their prayers; his angels are commissioned to guard and guide your steps; yea, the Lord himself fixes his eye of mercy upon your private and your public path, and is near you at your right hand, that you may not be moved. That he may comfort you with the light of his countenance, and uphold you with the arm of his power, is my frequent prayer.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

January 20, 1775.

MY LORD,

We have entered upon another year. So have thousands, perhaps millions, who will not see it close. An alarming thought to the worldling! at least it should be so. I have an im-

perfect remembrance of an account I read when I was a boy, of an ice-palace, built one winter at Petersburgh. The walls, the roof, the floors, the furniture, were all of ice, but finished with taste; and every thing that might be expected in a royal palace was to be found there; the ice, while in the state of water, being previously coloured, so that to the eye all seemed formed of proper materials: but all was cold, useless, and transient. Had the frost continued till now, the palace might have been standing; but with the returning spring it melted away, like the baseless fabric of a vision. Methinks there should have been one stone in the building, to have retained the inscription, *Sic transit gloria mundi!* for no contrivance could exhibit a fitter illustration of the vanity of human life. Men build and plan as if their works were to endure for ever; but the wind passes over them, and they are gone. In the midst of all their preparations, or at farthest, when they think they have just completed their designs, their breath goeth forth, they return to their earth; in that very day their thoughts perish.

How many sleep who kept the world awake!

Yet this ice-house had something of a leisurely dissolution, though, when it began to decay, all the art of man was unable to prop it: but often death comes hastily, and, like the springing of a mine, destroys to the very foundations, without previous notice. Then all we have been concerned in here (all but the consequences of our conduct, which will abide to eternity) will be no more to us than the remembrance of a dream. This truth is too plain to be denied; but the greater part of mankind act as if they were convinced it was false: they spend their days in vanity, and in a moment they go down to the grave. What cause of thankfulness have they who are delivered from this delusion, and who, by the knowledge of the glorious gospel, have learned their true state and end, are saved from the love of the present world, from the heart-distressing fear of death; and know, that if their earthly house were dissolved, like the ice-palace, they have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!

Yet even these are much concerned to realize the brevity and uncertainty of their present state, that they may be stimulated to make the most and the best of it; to redeem their time, and manage their precarious opportunities, so as may most tend to the praise and glory of him who has called them out of darkness into marvellous light. Why should any that have tasted that the Lord is gracious wish to live another day, but that they may have the honour to be fellow-workers with him, instrumental in promoting his designs, and of laying themselves out to the utmost of their abilities and influence in his service? To enjoy a sense of his lovingkindness, and to have the light of his countenance lifted up upon our souls, is indeed, respecting ourselves, the best part of life, yea, better than life itself; but this we shall have to unspeakably greater advantage, when we have finished our course, and shall be wholly freed from the body of sin. And therefore, the great desirable while here, seems to be grace, that we may serve him and suffer for him in the world. Though our first wish immediately upon our own accounts might be, to depart and be with Jesus, which is πολλῳ μαλλον κρεισσον, yet a lively thought of our immense obligations to his redeeming love, may reconcile us to a much longer continuance here, if we may by any means be subservient to diffuse the glory of his name, and the blessings of his salvation, which is God's great and principal end in preserving the world itself. When historians and politicians descant upon the rise and fall of empires, with all their professed sagacity, in tracing the connection between causes and effects, they are totally unacquainted with the great master-wheel which manages the whole movement, that is, the Lord's design in favour of his church and kingdom. To this every event is subordinate; to this every interfering interest must stoop. How easily might this position be proved, by reviewing the history of the period about the Reformation. Whether Dr. Robertson considers things in this light, in his history of Charles V. I know not, as I have not seen his books; but if not, however elaborate his performance may be in other respects, I must venture to say, it is essentially defective, and cannot give that light and pleasure to a spiritual reader of which the subject is capable. And I doubt not, that some who are yet unborn will hereafter clearly see and remark, that the present unhappy disputes between Great Britain and America, with their consequences, whatever they may be, are part of a series of events, of which the extension and interests of the church of Christ were the principal final causes. In a word, that Jesus may be known, trusted, and adored, and sinners, by the power of his gospel, be rescued from sin and Satan, is comparatively, the το ειν, the one great business, for the sake of which the succession of day and night, summer and winter, is still maintained; and when the plan of redemption is consummated, sin, which now almost fills the earth, will then set it on fire; and the united interest of all the rest of mankind, when detached from that of the people of God, will not plead for its preservation a single day. In this view, I congratulate your Lordship, that however your best endeavours to serve the temporal interests of the nation may fall short of your wishes; yet, so far as your situation gives you opportunity of supporting the gospel-cause, and facilitating its progress, you have a prospect both of a more certain and more important success. For

instance, it was, under God, your Lordship's favour and influence that brought me into the ministry. And though I be nothing, yet he who put it into your heart to patronize me, has been pleased not to suffer what you then did for his sake to be wholly in vain. He has been pleased, in a course of years, by so unworthy an instrument as I am, to awaken a number of persons, who were at that time dead in trespasses and sins; but now some of them are pressing on to the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus; and some of them are already before the throne. Should I suggest in some companies, that the conversion of a hundred sinners (more or less) to God, is an event of more real importance than the temporal prosperity of the greatest nation upon earth, I should be charged with ignorance and arrogance; but your Lordship is skilled in scriptural arithmetic, which alone can teach us to estimate the value of souls, and will agree with me, that one soul is worth more than the whole world, on account of its redemption-price, its vast capacities, and its duration. Should we suppose a nation to consist of forty millions, the whole and each individual to enjoy as much good as this life can afford, without abatement, for a term of fifty years each; all this good, or an equal quantity, might be exhausted by a single person in two thousand millions of years, which would be but a moment in comparison of the eternity which would still follow: and if this good were merely temporal good, the whole aggregate of it would be evil and misery, if compared with that happiness in God, of which only they who are made partakers of a divine life are capable. On the other hand, were a whole nation to be destroyed by such accumulated miseries as attended the siege of Jerusalem, the sum-total of these calamities would be but trifling, if set in competition with what every single person that dies in sin has to expect, when the sentence of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, shall be executed.

What an unexpected round have my thoughts taken since I set out from the ice-palace? It is time to relieve your Lordship, and to subscribe myself, &c.

LETTER XIX.

February 23, 1775.

MY LORD,

ASSENT to our Lord's declaration, "Without me ye can do nothing," not only upon the uthority of the speaker, but from the same rresistible and experimental evidence, as if e had told me, that I cannot make the sun shine, or change the course of the seasons. hough my pen and my tongue sometimes ove freely, yet the total incapacity and stagion of thought I labour under at other times, convinces me, that, in myself, I have not sufficiency to think a good thought; and, I believe the case would be the same, if that little measure of knowledge and abilities, which I am too prone to look upon as my own, were a thousand times greater than it is. For every new service I stand in need of a new supply, and can bring forth nothing of my supposed store into actual exercise, but by his immediate assistance. His gracious influence is that to those who are best furnished with gifts, which the water is to the mill, or the wind to the ship, without which the whole apparatus is motionless and useless. I apprehend that we lose much of the comfort which might arise from a sense of our continual dependence upon him, and of course fall short of acknowledging, as we ought, what we receive from him, by mistaking the manner of his operation. Perhaps we take it too much for granted, that communications from himself must bear some kind of sensible impression that they are his, and therefore are ready to give our own industry or ingenuity credit for those performances in which we can perceive no such impression; yet it is very possible that we may be under his influence when we are least aware of it; and though what we say, or write, or do, may seem no way extraordinary, yet that we should be led to such a particular turn of thought at one time rather than at another, has, in my own concerns, often appeared to me remarkable, from the circumstances which have attended, or the consequences which have followed. How often, in the choice of a text, or in the course of a sermon, or in a letter to a friend, have I been led to speak a word in season! and what I have expressed at large, and in general, has been so exactly suited to some case which I was utterly unacquainted with, that I could hardly have hit it so well, had I been previously informed of it. Some instances of this kind have been so striking, as hardly to admit a doubt of superior agency. And indeed, if believers in Jesus, however unworthy in themselves, are the temples of the Holy Ghost; if the Lord lives, dwells, and walks in them; if he is their life and their light; if he has promised to guide them with his eye, and to work in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,—methinks what I have mentioned, and more, may be reasonably expected. That line in the hymn,

Help I every moment need,

is not a hyperbolical expression, but strictly and literally true, not only in great emergencies, but in our smoother hours, and most familiar paths. This gracious assistance is afforded in a way imperceptible to ourselves, to hide pride from us, and to prevent us from being indolent and careless with respect to the use of appointed means: and it

would be likewise more abundantly, and perhaps more sensibly afforded, were our spirits more simple in waiting upon the Lord. But, alas! a divided heart, an undue attachment to some temporal object, sadly deaden our spirits (I speak for myself), and grieves the Lord's Spirit; so that we walk in darkness and at a distance, and though called to great privileges, live far below them. But methinks the thought of him who is always near, and upon whom we do and must incessantly depend, should suggest a powerful motive for the closest attention to his revealed will, and the most punctual compliance with it; for so far as the Lord withdraws we become as blind men, and with the clearest light, and upon the plainest ground, we are liable, or rather sure, to stumble at every step.

Though there is a principle of consciousness, and a determination of the will, sufficient to denominate our thoughts and performances our own, yet I believe mankind in general are more under an invisible agency than they apprehend. The Lord, immediately from himself, and perhaps by the ministry of the holy angels, guides, prompts, restrains, or warns his people. So there undoubtedly is what I may call a black inspiration, the influence of the evil spirits who work in the hearts of the disobedient, and not only excite their wills, but assist their faculties, and qualify as well as incline them to be more assiduously wicked, and more extensively mischievous, than they could be of themselves. I consider Voltaire, for instance, and many writers of the same stamp, to be little more than secretaries and amanuenses of one who has unspeakably more wit and adroitness in promoting infidelity and immorality, than they of themselves can justly pretend to. They have, for a while, the credit (if I may so call it) of the fund from whence they draw; but the world little imagines who is the real and original author of that philosophy and poetry, of those fine turns and sprightly inventions, which are so generally admired. Perhaps many, now applauded for their genius, would have been comparatively dolts, had they not been engaged in a cause which Satan has so much interest in supporting.

But to return to the more pleasing subject. How great and honourable is the privilege of a true believer! That he has neither wisdom nor strength in himself is no disadvantage; for he is connected with infinite wisdom and almighty power. Though weak as a worm, his arms are strengthened by the mighty God of Jacob, and all things become possible, yea easy, to him, that occur within the compass of his proper duty and calling. The Lord, whom he serves, engages to proportion his strength to his day, whether it be a day of service or of suffering; and though he be fallible and short-sighted, exceeding liable to mistake and imposition, yet, while he retains a sense that he is so, and, with the simplicity of a child, asks counsel and direction of the Lord, he seldom takes a wrong step, at least not in matters of consequence, and even his inadvertencies are over-ruled for good. If he forgets his true state, and thinks himself to be something, he presently finds he is indeed nothing; but if he is content to be nothing, and to have nothing, he is sure to find a seasonable and abundant communication of all that he wants. Thus he lives, like Israel in the wilderness, upon mere bounty; but then it is a bounty unchangeable, unwearied, inexhaustible, and all-sufficient. Moses, when speaking of the methods the Lord took to humble Israel, mentions his feeding them with manna as one method. I could not understand this for a time. I thought they were rather in danger of being proud, when they saw themselves provided for in such an extraordinary way. But the manna would not keep; they could not hoard it up, and were therefore in a state of absolute dependence from day to day. This appointment was well suited to humble them. Thus it is with us in spirituals. We should be better pleased, perhaps, to be set up with a stock or sufficiency at once,—such an inherent portion of wisdom and power, as we might depend upon, at least for common occasions, without being constrained by a sense of indigence, to have continual recourse to the Lord for every thing we want. But his way is best. His own glory is most displayed, and our safety most secured, by keeping us quite poor and empty in ourselves, and supplying us from one minute to another, according to our need. This, if any thing, will prevent boasting, and keep a sense of gratitude awake in our hearts. This is well adapted to quicken us in prayer, and furnishes us with a thousand occasions for praise, which would otherwise escape our notice.

But who or what are we, that the Most High should thus notice us! should visit us every morning, and water us every moment! It is an astonishing thought, that God should thus dwell with men! that he, before whom the mightiest earthly potentates are less than nothing, and vanity, should thus stoop and accommodate himself to the situation, wants, and capacities of the weakest, meanest, and poorest of his children! But so it hath pleased him. He seeth not as man seeth.

I am, &c.

LETTER XX.

August—1775.

MY LORD,

I HAVE no apt preface or introduction at hand; and as I have made it almost a rule not to study for what I should offer your Lordship, I therefore beg leave to begin abruptly.

It is the future promised privilege of believers in Jesus, that they shall be as the angels; and there is a sense in which we should endeavour to be as the angels now. This is intimated to us where we are taught to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." I have sometimes amused myself with supposing an angel should be appointed to reside a while upon earth in a human body; not in sinful flesh, like ours, but in a body free from infirmity, and still preserving an unabated sense of his own happiness in the favour of God, and of his unspeakable obligation to his goodness; and then I have tried to judge, as well as I could, how such an angel would comport himself in such a situation. I know not that I ever enlarged upon the thought, either in preaching or writing. Permit me to follow it a little in this paper.

Were I acquainted with this heavenly visitant, I am willing to hope I should greatly reverence him; and, if permitted, be glad, in some cases, to consult him: in some, but not in all; for I think my fear would be equal to my love. Methinks I could never venture to open my heart freely to him, and unfold to him my numberless complaints and infirmities; for, as he could have no experience of the like things himself, I should suppose he would not know how fully to pity me, indeed hardly how to bear with me, if I told him all. Alas! what a preposterous, strange, vile creature should I appear to an angel, if he knew me as I am! It is well for me that Jesus was made lower than the angels, and that the human nature he assumed was not distinct from the common nature of mankind, though secured from the common depravity; and because he submitted to be under the law in our name and stead, though he was free from sin himself, yet sin and its consequences being, for our sakes, charged upon him, he acquired, in the days of his humiliation, an experimental sympathy with his poor people. He knows the effects of sin and temptation upon us, by that knowledge whereby he knows all things; but he knows them likewise in a way more suitable for our comfort and relief, by the sufferings and exercises he passed through for us. Hence arises encouragement. We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted even as we are. When I add to this, the consideration of his power, promises, and ace, and that he is exalted on purpose to y, relieve, and save, I gather courage. With m I dare be free, and am not sorry, but d, that he knows me perfectly, that not a ught of my heart is hidden from him. For hout this infinite and exact knowledge of y disease, how could he effectually admini- to my cure?—But whither am I ram- g? I seem to have lost sight of the angel ady. I am now coming back, that if he cannot effectually pity me, he may at leas animate and teach me.

In the first place, I take it for granted this angel would think himself a stranger and pilgrim upon earth. He would not forget that his πολιτευμα* was in heaven. Surely he would look upon all the bustle of human life (farther than the design of his mission might connect him with it) with more indifference than we look upon the sports of children, or the amusements of idiots and lunatics, which give us an uneasiness, rather than excite a desire of joining in them. He would judge of every thing around him, by the reference and tendency it had to promote the will of him that sent him; and the most specious or splendid appearances, considered in any other view, would make no impression upon him.

Consequently, as to his own concernment, all his aim and desire would be, to fulfil the will of God. All situations would be alike to him; whether he was commanded, as in the case of Sennacherib, to destroy a mighty army with a stroke; or, as in the case of Hagar, to attend upon a woman, a servant, a slave; both services would be to him equally honourable and important, because he was in both equally pleasing his Lord, which would be his element and his joy, whether he was appointed to guide the reins of empire, or to sweep the streets.

Again, the angel would doubtless exhibit a striking example of benevolence; for, being free from selfish bias, filled with a sense of the love of God, and a knowledge of his adorable perfections, his whole heart, and soul, and strength, would be engaged and exerted, both from duty and inclination, to relieve the miseries, and advance the happiness of all around him: and in this he would follow the pattern of him who doth good to all, commanding his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, upon the just and the unjust; though, from the same pattern, he would shew an especial regard to the household of faith. An angel would take but little part in the controversies, contentions, and broils, which might happen in the time of his sojourning here, but would be a friend to all, so far as consistent with the general good.

The will and glory of God being the angel's great view, and having a more lively sense of the realities of an unseen world than we can at present conceive, he would certainly, in the first and chief place, have the success and spread of the glorious gospel at heart. Angels, though not redeemed with blood, yet feel themselves nearly concerned in the work of redemption. They admire its mysteries. We may suppose them well informed in the works of creation and providence. But, unlike to many men, who are

* Citizenship, or conversation.

satisfied with the knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, or history, they search and pry into the counsels of redeeming love, rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and think themselves well employed to be ministering spirits, to minister to the heirs of salvation. It would therefore be his chief delight to espouse and promote their cause, and to employ all his talents and influence in spreading the favour and knowledge of the name of Jesus, which is the only and effectual means of bringing sinners out of bondage and darkness into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Lastly, though his zeal for the glory of his Lord would make him willing to continue here till he had finished the work given him to do, he would, I am persuaded, look forward with desire to the appointed moment of his recal, that he might be freed from beholding and mixing with the sin and vanity of those who know not God, render his account with joy, and be welcomed to heaven with a "Well done, good and faithful servant." Surely he would long for this, as a labourer for the setting sun; and would not form any connection with the things of time, which should prompt him to wish his removal protracted for a single hour beyond the period of his prescribed service.

Alas, why am I not more like an angel? My views, in my better judgment, are the same. My motives and obligations are even stronger: an angel is not so deeply indebted to the grace of God, as a believing sinner, who was once upon the brink of destruction, who has been redeemed with blood, and might justly have been, before now, shut up with the powers of darkness, without hope. Yet the merest trifles are sufficient to debase my views, damp my activity, and impede my endeavours in the Lord's service, though I profess to have no other end or desire which can make a continuance in life worthy my wish.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXI.

November — 1775.

MY LORD,

Dum loquimur tempus fugit. In the midst of the hurries and changes of this unsettled state, we glide along swiftly towards an unchangeable world, and shall soon have as little connection with the scenes we are now passing through as we have with what happened before the flood. All that appears great and interesting in the present life, abstracted from its influence upon our internal character, and our everlasting allotment, will soon be as unreal as the visions of the night. This we know and confess; but though our judgments are convinced, it is seldom our hearts are duly affected by the thought. And while I find it easy to write in this moralizing strain, I feel myself disposed to be seriously engaged about trifles, and trifling in the most serious concerns, as if I believed the very contrary. It is with good reason the Lord challenges as his own prerogative the full knowledge of the deceitfulness, desperate wickedness, and latent depths of the human heart, which is capable of making even his own people so shamefully inconsistent with themselves and with their acknowledged principles.

I find that, when I have something agreeable in expectation (suppose, for instance, I were a few hours conversation with your Lordship), my imagination paints and prepares the scene beforehand; hurries me over the intervening space of time, as though it were a useless blank, and anticipates the pleasure I propose. Many of my thoughts of this kind are mere waking dreams; for perhaps the opportunity I am eagerly waiting for never happens, but is swallowed up by some unforeseen disappointment; or if not, something from within or without prevents its answering the idea I had formed of it. Nor does my fancy confine itself within the narrow limits of probabilities; it can busy itself as eagerly in ranging after chimeras and impossibilities, and engage my attention to the ideal pursuit of things that are never likely to happen. In these respects my imagination travels with wings; so that if the wildness, the multiplicity, the variety of the phantoms which pass through my mind in the space of a winter's day were known to my fellow-creatures, they would probably deem me, as I am often ready to deem myself, but a more sober and harmless kind of lunatic. But if I endeavour to put this active roving power in a right track, and to represent to myself those scenes which, though not yet present, I know will soon be realised, and have a greatness which the most enlarged exercise of my powers cannot comprehend: if I would fix my thoughts upon the hour of death, the end of the world, the coming of the Judge, or similar subjects; then my imagination is presently tame, cold, and jaded, travels very slowly, and is soon wearied in the road of truth; though in the fairy fields of uncertainty and folly it can skip from mountain to mountain. Mr. Addison supposes, that the imagination alone, as it can be differently affected, is capable of making us either inconceivably happy or miserable. I am sure it is capable of making us miserable, though I believe it seldom gives us much pleasure, but such as is to be found in a fool's paradise. But I am sure, were my outward life and conduct perfectly free from blame, the disorders and defilement of my imagination are sufficient to constitute me a chief sinner in the sight of him to whom the

thoughts and intents of the heart are continually open, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Upon this head I cannot but lament how universally almost education is suited, and as it were designed, to add to the stimulus of depraved nature. A cultivated imagination is commended and sought after as a very desirable talent, though it seldom means more than the possession of a large stock of other people's dreams and fables, with a certain quickness in compounding them, enlarging upon them, and exceeding them by inventions of our own. Poets, painters, and even historians are employed to assist us from our early years in forming an habitual relish for shadows and colourings, which both indispose for the search of truth and even unfit us for its reception, unless proposed just in our own way. The best effect of the belles lettres upon the imagination seems generally expressed by the word taste. And what is this taste, but a certain disposition which loves to be humoured, soothed, and flattered, and which can hardly receive or bear the most important truths, if they be not decorated and set off with such a delicacy and address as taste requires? I say the most important truths; because truths of a secular importance strike so closely upon the senses, that the decision of taste perhaps is not waited for. Thus, if a man be informed of the birth of his child, or that his house is on fire, the message takes up his thoughts, and he is seldom much disgusted with the manner in which it is delivered. But what an insuperable bar is the refined taste of many to their profiting by the preaching of the gospel, or even to their hearing it. Though the subject of a discourse be weighty, and some just representation given of the evil of sin, the worth of the soul, and the love of Christ; yet, if there be something amiss in the elocution, language, or manner of the preacher, people of taste must be possessed, in a good measure, of grace likewise, if they can hear him with tolerable patience. And perhaps three-fourths of those who are accounted the most sensible and judicious in the auditory, will remember little about the sermon, but the tone of the voice, the awkwardness of the attitude, the obsolete expressions, and the like; while the poor and simple, not being incumbered with this hurtful accomplishment, receive the messenger as the Lord's servant, and the truth as the Lord's word, and are comforted and edified.—But I stop. Some people would say, that I must suppose your Lordship to have but little taste, or else much grace, or I should not venture to trouble you with such letters as mine.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXII.

MY LORD,

THE apostle speaks of a blessedness which it is the design of the gospel to impart to those who receive it. The Galatians once had it, and spoke of it. The apostle reminds them of their loss, which is left upon record as a warning to us. His expression has led me sometimes to consider wherein a christian's present blessedness consists; I mean, that which is attainable in this state of trial, and the sense and exercise of which may be, and too often is, suspended and taken from us. It is a blessedness which, if we speak of man in a natural state, his eye hath not seen, nor his ear heard so as to understand it, nor can the idea of it arise in his heart. It is no way dependent upon outward circumstances. Prosperity cannot impart it, preserve or supply the want of it; nor can adversity put it out of our reach. The wise cannot acquire it by dint of superior abilities; nor shall the simple miss it for want of capacity.

The state of true believers, compared with that of others, is always blessed If they are born from above, and united to Jesus, they are delivered from condemnation, and are heirs of eternal life, and may therefore well be accounted happy. But I consider now, not their harvest, but their first fruits; not their portion in reversion, but the earnest attainable in this life; not what they shall be in heaven, but what, in an humble attendance upon the Lord, they may be while upon earth There is even at present a prize of our high calling set before us. It is much to be desired, that we had such a sense of its value as might prompt us so to run that we might obtain. I have thought this blessedness may be comprised in five particulars, though, in order to take a succinct view of the subject, some of these might be branched out into several others; but I would not by too many subdivisions give my letter the air of a sermon.

In the first pl ce, a clear, well grounded, habitual persuasion of our acceptance in the Beloved is attainable; and though we may be safe, we cannot be said to enjoy blessedness without it. To be in a state of suspense and uncertainty in a point of so great importance is painful; and the Lord has accordingly provided that his people may have strong consolation on this head. They are blessed therefore who have such views of the power, grace, and suitableness of Jesus, and the certainty and security of redemption in him, together with such a consciousness that they have anchored their hopes and ventured their all upon his person, work, and promise, as furnishes them with a ready answer to all the cavils of unbelief and Satan, in the apostle's manner,

Rom. viii. 31—37. That Paul could thus challenge and triumph over all charges and enemies, was not an appendage of his office as an apostle, but a part of his experience as a believer; and it lies equally open to us, for we have the same gospel and the same promises as he had: nor is the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's teaching a whit weakened by length of time. But many stop short of this. They have a hope, but it rather springs from their frames and feelings than from a spiritual apprehension of the Redeemer's engagements and fulness, and therefore fluctuates and changes like the weather. Could they be persuaded to pray with earnestness and importunity, as the apostle prays for them, Ephes. i. 17, 18. and iii. 16, 19. they would find a blessedness which they have not yet known; for it is said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." And it is said likewise, "Ye receive not, because ye ask not."

Could this privilege be enjoyed singly, the natural man would have no objection to it. He would (as he thinks) be pleased to know he should be saved at last, provided that while here he might live in his sins. But the believer will not, cannot think himself blessed, unless he has likewise a conscience void of offence. This was the apostle's daily exercise, though no one was further from a legal spirit, or more dependent upon Jesus for acceptance. But if we live in any known sin, or allow ourselves in the customary omission of any known duty, supposing it possible in such a case to preserve a sense of our acceptance (which can hardly be supposed; for if the Spirit be grieved, our evidences decline of course) yet we could not be easy. If a traveller was absolutely sure of reaching his journey's end in safety, yet if he walked with a thorn in his foot, he must take every step in pain. Such a thorn will be felt in the conscience till we are favoured with a simplicity of heart, and made willing in all things, great or small, to yield obedience to the authority of the Lord's precepts, and make them the standing rule of our conduct, without wilfully admitting a single exception. At the best, we shall be conscious of innumerable shortcomings, and shameful defilements; but these things will not break our peace, if our hearts are upright. But if we trifle with light, and connive at what we know to be wrong, we shall be weak, restless, and uncomfortable. How many who, we would hope, are the children of the King, are lean from day to day, because some right-hand or right-eye evil, which they cannot persuade themselves to part with, keeps them halting between two opinions! and they are as distant from happiness, as they are from the possibility of reconciling the incompatible services of God and the world. But happy indeed is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Real communion with the Lord, in his appointed means of grace, is likewise an important branch of this blessedness. They were instituted for this end, and are sufficient, by virtue of his power and Spirit, to answer it. I do not believe this enjoyment will be always equal. But I believe a comfortable sense of it, in some measure, is generally attainable. To read the scriptures, not as an attorney may read a will, merely to know the sense, but as the heir reads it, as a description and proof of his interest; to hear the gospel, as the voice of our Beloved, so as to have little leisure either for admiring the abilities or censuring the defects of the preacher; and, in prayer, to feel a liberty of pouring out our hearts before the Lord, to behold some glances of his goodness passing before us, and to breathe forth before him the tempers of a child, the spirit of adoption;—and thus, by beholding his glory, to be conformed more and more to his image, and to renew our strength, by drawing water out of the wells of salvation: Herein is blessedness. They who have tasted it can say, it is good for me to draw nigh to God. The soul, thus refreshed by the water of life, is preserved from thirsting after the vanities of the world, thus instructed in the sanctuary, comes down from the mount filled with heavenly wisdom, anointed with a holy unction, and therefore qualified to judge, speak, and act in character, in all the relations and occasions of secular life. In this way, besides the pleasure, a spiritual taste is acquired, something analogous to the meaning of the word taste when applied to music or good breeding, by which discords and improprieties are observed and avoided, as it were by instinct, and what is right is felt and followed, not so much by the force of rules, as by a habit insensibly acquired, and in which the substance of all necessary rules are, if I may so say, digested. O that I knew more of this blessedness, and more of its effects!

Another branch of blessedness is a power of reposing ourselves and our concerns upon the Lord's faithfulness and care, and may be considered in two respects. A reliance upon him that he will surely provide for us, guide us, protect us, be our help in trouble, our shield in danger; so that, however poor, weak, and defenceless in ourselves, we may rejoice in his all-sufficiency as our own;—and farther, in consequence of this, a peaceful, humble submission to his will, under all events, which, upon their first impression, are contrary to our own views and desires. Surely, in a world like this, where every thing is uncertain, where we are exposed to trials on every hand, and know not but a single hour may bring forth something painful, yea dreadful to our natural sensations, there can be no blessedness but so far as we are thus enabled to entrust and resign all to the direction and faithfulness of the Lord our Shepherd. For

want of more of this spirit, multitudes of professing christians perplex and wound themselves, and dishonour their high calling, by continual anxieties, alarms, and complaints. They think nothing safe under the Lord's keeping, unless their own eye is likewise upon it, and are seldom satisfied with any of his dispensations; for, though he gratify their desires in nine instances, a refusal in the tenth spoils the relish of all, and they shew the truths of the gospel can afford them little comfort, if self is crossed. But, blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is! He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: he shall be kept in perfect peace, though the earth be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.

The paper admonishes me it is time to relieve your Lordship. And I have not room to detain you long upon the fifth particular. It belongs to a believer's blessedness to feel his spirit cheerful and active for the Lord's service in the world. For to what other end should he wish to live? If he thought of himself only, it would be better to depart and be with Jesus immediately. But he is a debtor to his grace and love; and, though strictly he can make no returns, yet he longs to shew his thankfulness; and, if the Lord give him a heart to redeem his time, to devote his strength and influence, and lay himself out for his service,—that he may be instrumental in promoting his cause, in comforting his people,—or enable him to let his light shine before men, that his God and his Father may be honoured;—he will account it blessedness. This is indeed the great end of life, and he knows it will evidently appear so at the approach of death; and therefore, while others are cumbered about many things, he esteems this the one thing needful.

I remain, my Lord, &c,

LETTER XXIII.

July — 1776.

MY LORD,

THAT I may not weary you by a preamble, I oblige myself to take the turn of my letter from some passage of scripture; and I fix upon that which just now occurred to my thoughts, a clause in that pattern of prayer ...ich he who best knows our state has been ...ased to leave for the instruction of his ...ple, in their great concern of waiting at ... throne of grace, Matth. vi. 13. "Lead us ... into temptation." This petition is seasonable at all times, and to all persons who ...e any right knowledge of themselves, or ...ir spiritual calling.

...he word temptation, taken at large, in...les every kind of trial. To tempt, is to try ...ove. In this sense, it is said, the Lord tempted Abraham, that is, he tried him; for God cannot tempt to evil. He proposed such an act of obedience to him, as was a test of his faith, love, dependence, and integrity. Thus, all our afflictions, under his gracious management, are appointed to prove, manifest, exercise, and purify the graces of his children. And not afflictions only; prosperity likewise is a state of temptation: and many who have endured sharp sufferings, and came off honourably, have been afterwards greatly hurt and ensnared by prosperity. To this purpose the histories of David and Hezekiah are in point. But by temptation we more frequently understand the wiles and force which Satan employs in assaulting our peace, or spreading snares for our feet. He is always practising against us, either directly and from himself, by the access he has to our hearts, or mediately, by the influence he has over the men and the things of this world. The words which follow confirm this sense,—"Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil," *απο του πονηρου*, from the *evil one*, as it might be properly rendered here, and in 1 John v. 19. The subtilty and power of this adversary are very great: he is an over-match for us; and we have no hope of safety but in the Lord's protection. Satan's action upon the heart may be illustrated by the action of the wind upon the sea. The sea sometimes appears smooth, but it is always disposed to swell and rage, and to obey the impulse of every storm. Thus the heart may be sometimes quiet; but the wind of temptation will awaken and rouse it in a moment: for it is essential to our depraved nature to be unstable and yielding as the water; and when it is under the impression of the enemy, its violence can only be controuled by him who says to the raging sea, "Be still; here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The branches of temptation are almost innumerable; but the principal may be reduced to the several faculties of the soul (as we commonly speak) to which they are more directly suited.

He has temptations for the understanding. He can blind the mind with prejudices and false reasonings, and ply it with arguments for infidelity, till the most obvious truths become questionable. Even where the gospel has been received, he can insinuate error, which, for the suddenness and malignity of its effects, may be properly compared to poison. A healthy man may be poisoned in a moment; and, if he be, the baneful drug is usually mixed with his food. Many, who for a while seemed to be sound in the faith, have had their judgments strongly and strangely perverted, and prevailed upon to renounce and oppose the truths they once prized and defended. Such instances are striking proofs of human weakness, and loud calls to watchfulness and dependence, and to beware of leaning to our own understandings. For

these purposes he employs both preachers and authors, who, by fine words and fair speeches, beguile the hearts of the unwary. And, by his immediate influence upon the mind, he is able, if the Lord permits him, to entangle those who are providentially placed out of the reach of corrupt and designing men.

He tempts the conscience. By working upon the unbelief of our hearts, and darkening the glory of the gospel, he can hold down the soul to the number, weight, and aggravation of its sins, so that it shall not be able to look up to Jesus, nor draw any comfort from his blood, promises, and grace. How many go burdened in this manner, seeking relief from duties, and perhaps spending their strength in things not commanded, though they hear, and perhaps acknowledge the gospel? Nor are the wisest and most established able to withstand his assaults, if the Lord withdraw, and give him leave to employ his power and subtilty unrestrained. The gospel affords sufficient ground for an abiding assurance of hope; nor should we rest satisfied without it. However, the possession and preservation of this privilege depends upon the Lord's presence with the soul, and his shielding us from Satan's attacks; for I am persuaded he is able to sift and shake the strongest believer upon earth.

He has likewise temptations suited to the will. Jesus makes his people willing in the day of his power; yet there is a contrary principle remaining within them, of which Satan knows how to avail himself. There are occasions in which he almost prevails to set self again upon the throne, as Dagon was raised after he had fallen before the ark. How else should any who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, give way to a repining spirit, account his dispensations hard, or his precepts too strict, so as to shrink from their observance through the fear of men, or a regard to their wordly interest?

Farther, he has snares for the affections. In managing these, he gains a great advantage from our situation in a world that knows not God. The scriptures give Satan the title of god of this world; and believers learn, by painful experience, how great his power is in and over the persons and things of it. So that to be stedfast in wisdom's ways, requires unremitted efforts, like pressing through a crowd, or swimming against a stream. How hard is it to live in the midst of pitch and not to be defiled? The air of the world is infectious. Our business and unavoidable connections are so interwoven with occasions of sin, and there is so much in our hearts suited to them, that unless we are incessantly upheld by almighty strength, we cannot stand a day or an hour. Past victories afford us no greater security than they did Samson, who was shamefully surprised by enemies whom he had formerly conquered. Nor are we only tempted by compliances that are evil in themselves. With respect to these, perhaps, conscience may be awake, and we stand upon our guard; but we are still upon Satan's ground, and while he may seem to allow himself defeated, he can dexterously change his method, and come upon us where we do not suspect him: for, *periculum in licitis*; perhaps our greatest danger arises from things in themselves lawful. He can tempt us by our nearest and dearest friend, and pervert every blessing of a kind providence into an occasion of drawing our hearts from the Giver; yea spiritual blessings, gifts, comforts, and even graces, are sometimes the engines by which he practises against us, to fill us with vain confidence and self-sufficiency, or to lull us into formality and indolence.

That wonderful power which we call the imagination, is, I suppose rather the medium of the soul's perceptions during its present state of union with the body, than a spiritual faculty, strictly speaking; but it partakes largely of that depravity which sin has brought upon our whole frame, and affords Satan an avenue for assaulting us with the most terrifying, if not the most dangerous of his temptations. At the best, we have but an indifferent command over it. We cannot, by an act of our own will, exclude a thousand painful, wild, inconsistent, and hurtful ideas, which are ever ready to obtrude themselves upon our minds; and a slight alteration in the animal system, in the motion of the blood or nervous spirit, is sufficient to withdraw it wholly from our dominion, and to leave us like a city without walls or gates, exposed to the incursion of our enemy. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; and, with all our boasted knowledge of other things, can form no conception of what is so vastly interesting to us, the mysterious connection between soul and body, and the manner in which they are mutually affected by each other. The effects we too sensibly feel. The wisest of men would be accounted fools or mad, were they to express in words a small part of what passes within them; and it would appear that much of the soberest life is little better than a waking dream; but how dreadful are the consequences when the Lord permits some hidden pin in the human machine to be altered! Immediately a door flies open, which no hand but his can shut, and the enemy pours in, like a flood, falsehood and horror, and the blackness of darkness; the judgment is borne down and disabled, and the most distressing illusions seize us with all the apparent force of evidence and demonstration. When this is the case in a certain degree, we call it distraction; but there are various degrees of it, which leave a person in the possession of his senses as to the things of common life, and yet are sufficient, with respect to his spiritual concerns, to shake the very foundations of his hope and deprive

him of all peace and comfort, and make him a terror to himself. All the Lord's people are not called to navigate in these deep waters of soul distress; but all are liable. Ah! if we knew what some suffer, the *horribilia de Deo*, and the *terribilia de fide*, which excruciate the minds of those over whom Satan is permitted to tyrannize in this way, surely we should be more earnest and frequent in praying, "Lead us not into temptation." From some little sense I have of the malice and subtilty of our spiritual enemies, and the weakness of those barriers which we have to prevent their assaults, I am fully persuaded that nothing less than the continual exertion of that almighty power which preserves the stars in their orbits, can maintain our peace of mind for an hour or a minute. In this view, all comparative difference in external situations seems to be annihilated; for, as the Lord's presence can make his people happy in a dungeon, so there are temptations which, if we felt them, would instantly render us incapable of receiving a moment's satisfaction from an assemblage of all earthly blessings, and make the company of our dearest friends tasteless, if not insupportable.

Ah! how little do the gay and the busy think of these things! How little indeed do they think of them who profess to believe them! How faint is the sense of our obligations to him, who freely submitted to the fiercest onsets of the powers of darkness, to free us from the punishment due to our sins! otherwise we must have been for ever shut up with those miserable and merciless spirits who delight in our torment, and who, even in the present state, if they get access to our minds, can make our existence a burden.

But our Lord, who knows and considers our weakness, of which we are so little aware, allows and directs us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." We are not to expect an absolute freedom from temptation; we are called to be soldiers, and must sometimes meet with enemies, and perhaps with wounds; yet, considering this prayer as provided by him who knows what we are, and where we are, it may afford us both instruction and consolation.

It calls to a constant reflection upon our own weakness. Believers especially young ones, are prone to rest too much in grace received. They feel their hearts warm, and, like Peter, are ready to please themselves with thinking how they would act in such or such state of trial. It is as if the Lord had said, Poor worms, be not high minded; but fear; nd pray, that if it may be, you may be kept rom learning, by bitter experience, how weak our supposed strength is." It sweetly intimates, that all our ways, and all our enemies, re in the hands of our great Shepherd. He ows our path. We are short-sighted, and not tell what an hour may bring forth; t we are under his protection, and, if we depend upon him, we need not be anxiously afraid. He will be faithful to the trust we repose in him, and will suffer no temptation to overtake us, but what he will support us under and bring us through. But it becomes us to beware of security and presumption, to keep our eyes upon him, and not to think ourselves safe a moment longer than our spirits feel and breathe the meaning of this petition.

It implies, likewise, the duty of watchfulness on our part, as our Lord joins them elsewhere, "Watch and pray." If we desire not to be led into temptation, surely we are not to run into it. If we wish to be preserved from error, we are to guard against a curious and reasoning spirit. If we would preserve peace of conscience, we must beware of trifling with the light and motions of the Holy Spirit; for without his assistance we cannot maintain faith in exercise. If we would not be ensnared by the men of the world, we are to keep at a proper distance from them. The less we have to do with them, the better, excepting so far as the providence of God makes it our duty in the discharge of our callings and relations, and taking opportunities of doing them good. And though we cannot wholly shut Satan out of our imaginations, we should be cautious that we do not wilfully provide fuel for his flame; but entreat the Lord to set a watch upon our eyes and our ears, and to teach us to reject the first motions and the smallest appearance of evil.

I have been so intent upon my subject, that I have once and again forgot I was writing to your Lordship, otherwise I should not have let my lucubration run to so great a length, which I certainly did not intend when I began. I shall not add to this fault, by making an apology. I have touched upon a topic of great importance to myself. I am one among many who have suffered greatly for want of paying more attention to my need of this prayer. O that I could be wiser hereafter, and always act and speak as knowing that I am always upon a field of battle, and beset by legions!

I am, with great respect, *&c*

LETTER XXIV.

September — 1776

MY LORD,

WITHOUT any preamble, I purpose now to wait on your Lordship, with a few thoughts on the meaning of that name which first obtained at Antioch; in other words, what it is to be a Christian? What are the effects which, making allowance for the unavoidable infirmities attending upon the present state of mortality, may be expected from a real experimental knowledge of the gospel? I would not insinuate that none are christians who do

not come up to the character I would describe; for then I fear I should unchristian myself; but only to consider what the scriptures encourage us to aim at, as the prize of our high calling in this life. It is generally allowed and lamented, that we are too apt to live below our privileges, and to stop short of what the spirit and the promises of the gospel point out to us as attainable.

Mr Pope's admired line, "An honest man's the noblest work of God," may be admitted as a truth, when rightly explained. A christian is the noblest work of God in this visible world, and bears a much brighter impression of his glory and goodness than the sun in the firmament; and none but a christian can be strictly and properly honest: all others are too much under the power of self, to do universally to others as they would others should do unto them; and nothing but a uniform conduct upon this principle deserves the name of honesty.

The christian is a new creature, born and taught from above. He has been convinced of his guilt and misery as a sinner, has fled for refuge to the hope set before him, has seen the Son, and believed on him. His natural prejudices against the glory and grace of God's salvation have been subdued and silenced by almighty power: he has accepted the Beloved, and is made acceptable in him. He now knows the Lord: he has renounced the confused, distant, and uncomfortable notions he once formed of God; and beholds him in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, the only door by which we can enter to any true satisfying knowledge of God, or communion with him. But he sees God in Christ reconciled, a Father, a Saviour, and a Friend, who has freely forgiven him all his sins, and given him the spirit of adoption. He is now no longer a servant, much less a stranger, but a son; and because a son, an heir, already interested in all the promises, admitted to the throne of grace, and an assured expectant of eternal glory. The gospel is designed to give us not only a peradventure or a probability, but a certainty, both of our acceptance and our perseverance, till death shall be swallowed up in life. And though many are sadly fluctuating and perplexed upon this head, and perhaps all are so for a season, yet there are those who can say, we know that we are of God; and therefore they are stedfast and immoveable in his way, because they are confident that their labour shall not be in vain, but that, when they shall be absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord. This is the state of the advanced experienced christian, who, being enabled to make his profession the chief business of his life, is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Every one who has this hope in Christ, purifieth himself even as he is pure. I would now attempt a sketch of the christian's temper, formed upon these principles and hopes, under the leading branches of its exercises, respecting God, himself, and his fellow-creatures.

The christian's temper God-ward is evidenced by humility. He has received from Gethsemane and Golgotha such a sense of the evil of sin, and of the holiness of God, combined with his matchless love to sinners, as has deeply penetrated his heart: he has an affecting remembrance of the state of rebellion and enmity in which he once lived against this holy and good God; and he has a quick perception of the defilements and defects which still debase his best services. His mouth is therefore stopped as to boasting; he is vile in his own eyes, and is filled with wonder that the Lord should visit such a sinner with such a salvation. He sees so vast a disproportion between the obligations he is under to grace, and the returns he makes, that he is disposed, yea constrained, to adopt the apostle's words without affectation, and to account himself less than the least of all saints; and knowing his own heart, while he sees only the outside of others, he is not easily persuaded there can be a believer upon earth so faint, so unfruitful, so unworthy as himself. Yet, though abased, he is not discouraged, for he enjoys peace. The dignity, offices, blood, righteousness, faithfulness, and compassion of the Redeemer, in whom he rests, trusts, and lives, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, are adequate to all his wants and wishes, provide him with an answer to every objection, and give him no less confidence in God, than if he were sinless as an angel: for he sees, that though sin has abounded in him, grace has much more abounded in Jesus. With respect to the past, all things are become new; with respect to the present and future, he leans upon an almighty arm, and relies upon the word and power which made and upholds the heavens and the earth. Though he feels himself unworthy of the smallest mercies, he claims and expects the greatest blessings that God can bestow; and being rooted and grounded in the knowledge and love of Christ, his peace abides, and is not greatly affected, either by the variation of his own frames, or the changes of God's dispensations towards him while here. With such a sense of himself, such a heartfelt peace and heavenly hope, how can his spirit but breathe love to his God and Saviour? It is indeed the perfection of his character and happiness, that his soul is united by love to the chief good. The love of Christ is the joy of his heart, and the spring of his obedience. With his Saviour's presence, he finds a heaven begun upon earth; and without it, all the other glories of the heavenly state would not content him. The excellence of Christ, his love to sinners, especially his dying love; his love to himself in seeking and saving him when lost, saving

him to the utmost—But I must stop.—Your Lordship can better conceive than I can describe, how and why Jesus is dear to the heart that knows him. That part of the christian's life which is not employed in the active service of his Lord, is chiefly spent in seeking and maintaining communion with him. For this he plies the throne, and studies the word of grace, and frequents the ordinances, where the Lord has promised to meet with his people. These are his golden hours; and when thus employed, how poor and trivial does all that the world calls great and important appear in his eyes! Yea, he is solicitous to keep up an intercourse of heart with his Beloved in his busiest scenes; and so far as he can succeed, it alleviates all his labours, and sweetens all his troubles. And when he is neither communing with his Lord, nor acting for him, he accounts his time lost, and is ashamed and grieved. The truth of his love is manifested by submission. This is twofold and absolute, and without reserve in each. He submits to his revealed will, as made known to him by precept and by his own example. He aims to tread in all his Saviour's footsteps, and makes conscience of all his commandments, without exception and without hesitation. Again, he submits to his providential will: he yields to his sovereignty, acquiesces in his wisdom; he knows he has no right to complain of any thing, because he is a sinner; and he has no reason, because he is sure the Lord does all things well. Therefore this submission is not forced, but is an act of trust. He knows he is not more unworthy than he is unable to chuse for himself, and therefore rejoices that the Lord has undertaken to manage for him; and were he compelled to make his own choice, he could only chuse, that all his concerns should remain in that hand to which he has already committed them. And thus he judges of public as well as of his personal affairs. He cannot be an unaffected spectator of national sins, nor without apprehension of their deserved consequences. He feels, and almost trembles for others, but he himself dwells under the shadow of the Almighty, in a sanctuary that cannot be forced; and therefore, should he see the earth shaken, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, his heart would not be greatly moved, for God is his refuge. The Lord reigns. He sees his Saviour's hands directing every dark appearance, and over-ruling all to the accomplishment of his own great purposes: this satisfies him, and though the winds and waves should rise high, he can venture his own little bark in the storm, for he has an infallible and almighty Pilot on board with him. And indeed, why should he fear when he has nothing to lose? His best concerns are safe; and other things he holds as gifts from his Lord, to whose call he is ready to resign them, in whatever way he pleases; well knowing, that creatures and instruments cannot of themselves touch a hair of his head without his Lord's permission, and that if he does permit them, it must be for the best.

I might enlarge farther.—But I shall proceed to consider the christian's temper respecting himself. He lives godly and soberly. By sobriety we mean more than that he is not a drunkard; his tempers towards God of course form him to a moderation in all temporal things. He is not scrupulous or superstitious; he understands the liberty of the gospel, that every creature of God is good if it be received with thanksgiving. He does not aim at being needlessly singular, nor practise self-devised austerities. The christian is neither a Stoic nor a Cynic; yet he finds daily cause for watchfulness and restraint. Satan will not often tempt a believer to gross crimes: our greatest snares and sorest conflicts are usually found in things lawful in themselves, but hurtful to us by their abuse, engrossing too much of our time, or of our hearts, or somehow indisposing us for communion with the Lord. The christian will be jealous of any thing that might entangle his affections, damp his zeal, or straiten him in his opportunities of serving his Saviour. He is likewise content with his situation, because the Lord chuses it for him; his spirit is not eager for additions and alterations in his circumstances. If divine providence points out and leads to a change, he is ready to follow, though it should be what the world would call from a better to a worse; for he is a pilgrim and a stranger here, and a citizen of heaven. As people of fortune sometimes, in travelling, submit cheerfully to inconvenient accommodations, very different from their homes, and comfort themselves with thinking they are not always to live so; so the christian is not greatly solicitous about externals. If he has them, he will use them moderately. If he has but little of them, he can make a good shift without them: he is but upon a journey, and will soon be at home. If he be rich, experience confirms our Lord's words, Luke xii. 15.; and satisfies him, that a large room, a crowd of servants, and twenty dishes upon his table, add nothing to the real happiness of life. Therefore he will not have his heart set upon such things. If he be in a humbler state, he is more disposed to pity than to envy those above him; for he judges they must have many encumbrances from which he is freed. However, the will of God, and the light of his countenance, are the chief things the christian, whether rich or poor, regards; and therefore his moderation is made known unto all men.

A third branch of the christian's temper respects his fellow-creatures. And here, methinks, if I had not filled a sheet already, I could enlarge with pleasure. We have in this degenerate day, among those who claim and

are allowed the name of Christian, too many of a narrow, selfish, mercenary spirit; but in the beginning it was not so. The gospel is designed to cure such a spirit, but gives no indulgence to it. A christian has the mind of Christ, who went about doing good, who makes his sun to shine upon the good and the evil, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. His Lord's example forms him to the habit of diffusive benevolence; he breathes a spirit of good will to mankind, and rejoices in every opportunity of being useful to the souls and bodies of others, without respect to parties or interests. He commiserates, and would if possible alleviate the miseries of all around him; and if his actual services are restrained by want of ability, yet all share in his sympathy and prayers. Acting in the spirit of his Master, he frequently meets with a measure of the like treatment: but if his good is requited with evil, he labours to overcome evil with good. He feels himself a sinner, and needs much forgiveness: this makes him ready to forgive. He is not haughty, captious, easily offended, or hard to be reconciled; for at the feet of Jesus he has learned meekness. And when he meets with unkindness or injustice, he considers, that though he has not deserved such things from men, they are instruments employed by his heavenly Father (from whom he has deserved to suffer much more), for his humiliation and chastisement; and is therefore more concerned for their sins than for his own sufferings, and prays, after the pattern of his Saviour, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He knows he is fallible; therefore cannot be positive. He knows he is frail; and therefore dares not be censorious. As a member of society, he is just, punctual in the discharge of every relative duty, faithful to his engagements and promises, rendering to all their dues, obedient to lawful authority, and acting to all men according to the golden rule, of doing as he would be done by. His conduct is simple, devoid of artifice, and consistent, attending to every branch of duty: and in the closet, the family, the church, and the transactions of common life, he is the same man; for in every circumstance he serves the Lord, and aims to maintain a conscience void of offence in his sight. No small part of the beauty of his profession in the sight of men, consists in the due government of his tongue. The law of truth, and kindness, and purity, is upon his lips. He abhors lying; and is so far from inventing a slander, that he will not repeat a report to the disadvantage of his neighbour, however true, without a proper call. His converse is cheerful, but inoffensive; and he will no more wound another with his wit (if he has a talent that way) than with a knife. His speech is with grace, seasoned with salt, and suited to promote the peace and edification of all around him.

Such is the christian in civil life; but though he loves all mankind, he stands in a nearer relation, and bears an especial brotherly love, to all who are partakers of the faith and hope of the gospel. This regard is not confined within the pale of a denomination, but extended to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He calls no man master himself; nor does he wish to impose a Shibboleth of his own upon others. He rejoices in the image of God, wherever he sees it, and in the work of God, wherever it is carried on. Though tenacious of the truths which the Lord has taught him, his heart is open to those who differ from him in less essential points, and allows to others that right of private judgment which he claims for himself, and is disposed to hold communion in love with all who hold the Head. He cannot, indeed, countenance those who set aside the one foundation which God has laid in Zion, and maintain errors derogatory to the honour of his Saviour, or subversive of the faith and experience of his people; yet he wishes well to their persons, pities and prays for them, and is ready in meekness to instruct them that oppose: but there is no bitterness in his zeal, being sensible that raillery and invective are dishonourable to the cause of truth, and quite unsuitable in the mouth of a sinner, who owes all that distinguishes him from the vilest of men to the free grace of God. In a word, he is influenced by the wisdom from above, which, as it is pure, is likewise peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

I must just recur to my first head, and observe, that with this spirit and deportment, the christain, while he is enabled to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man, is still sensible and mindful of indwelling sin.. He has his eye more upon his rule than upon his attainments; and therefore finds and confesses, that in every thing he comes exceedingly short, and that his best services are not only defective, but defiled. He accounts himself an unprofitable servant, is abased in his own eyes, and derives all his hope and comfort, as well as his strength, from Jesus, whom he has known, received, and trusted, to whom he has committed his soul, in whom he rejoices, and worships God in the spirit, renouncing all confidence in the flesh, and esteeming all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowedge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

If I have lately been rather tardy in making my payments to your Lordship, I have proportionably increased the quantity. It is high time I should now relieve your patience. I hope I long to be a christian indeed; and I hope this hasty exemplification of my wishes

will answer to your Lordship's experience better than I fear it does to my own. May I beg a remembrance in your prayers, that he who has given me to will and desire, may work in me to be and to do according to his own good pleasure.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXV.

November — 1776.

MY LORD,

My London journey, which prevented my writing in October, made me amends by an opportunity of waiting upon your Lordship in person. Such seasons are not only pleasant at the time, but afford me pleasure in the review. I could have wished the half-hour we were together by ourselves prolonged to half a day. The subject your Lordship was pleased to suggest has been often upon my mind; and glad should I be, were I able to offer you any thing satisfactory upon it. There is no doubt but first religious impressions are usually mingled with much of a legal spirit; and that conscience at such a time is not only tender, but misinformed and scrupulous; and I believe, as your Lordship intimated, that when the mind is more enlightened, and we feel a liberty from many fetters we had imposed upon ourselves, we are in danger of verging too far towards the other extreme. It seems to me that no one person can adjust the medium, and draw the line exactly for another. There are so many particulars in every situation, of which a stranger cannot be a competent judge, and the best human advices and models are mixed with such defects, that it is not right to expect others to be absolutely guided by our rules, nor is it safe for us implicitly to adopt the decisions or practices of others. But the scriptures undoubtedly furnish sufficient and infallible rules for every person, however circumstanced; and the throne of grace is appointed for us to wait upon the Lord for the best exposition of his precepts. Thus David often prays to be led in the right way, in the path of judgment. By frequent prayer, and close acquaintance with the scriptures, and an habitual attention to the frame of our hearts, there is a certain delicacy of spiritual taste nd discernment to be acquired, which ren-rs a nice disquisition concerning the nature nd limits of the *adiaphora*, as they are called, how near we may go to the utmost bounds what is right, without being wrong, quite nnecessary. Love is the clearest and most nsuasive casuist; and when our love to the ord is in lively exercise, and the rule of his ord is in our eye, we seldom make great takes. And I believe the overdoings of a ng convert, proceeding from an honest simplicity of heart, and a desire of pleasing the Lord, are more acceptable in his sight, than a certain coolness of conduct which frequently takes place afterwards, when we are apt to look back with pity upon our former weakness, and secretly to applaud ourselves for our present greater attainments in knowledge, though perhaps (alas that it should ever be so!) we may have lost as much in warmth as we have gained in light.

From the time we know the Lord, and are bound to him by the cords of love and gratitude, the two chief points we should have in our view, I apprehend, are, to maintain communion with him in our own souls, and to glorify him in the sight of men. Agreeably to these views, though the scriptures do not enumerate or decide, *totidem verbis*, for or against many things which some plead for, and others condemn; yet they furnish us with some general canons, which, if rightly applied, will perhaps go a good way towards settling the debate, at least to the satisfaction of those who would rather please God than man. Some of these canons I will just mark to your Lordship:—Rom. xii. 1, 2.; 1 Cor. viii. 13. and x. 31.; 2 Cor. vi. 17.; Ephes. iv. 30.; Ephes. v. 11, 15, 16.; 1 Thes. v. 22.; Ephes. vi. 18.; to which I may add, as suitable to the present times, Isa. xxii. 12. Luke xxi. 34. I apprehend the spirit of these and similar passages of scripture (for it would be easy to adduce a larger number) will bring a christian under such restrictions as follow:

To avoid and forbear, for his own sake, whatever has a tendency to damp and indispose his spirit in attendance upon the means of grace; for such things, if they be not condemned as sinful *per se*, if they be not absolutely unlawful, yea though they be, when duly regulated, lawful and right (for often our chief snares are entwined with our blessings); yet if they have a repeated and evident tendency to deaden our hearts to divine things, of which each person's experience must determine, there must be something in them, either in season, measure, or circumstance, wrong to us; and let them promise what they will, they do but rob us of our gold to pay us with counters. For the light of God's countenance, and an open cheerfulness of spirit in walking with him in private, is our chief joy; and we must be already greatly hurt, if any thing can be pursued, allowed, or rested in, as a tolerable substitute for it.

For the sake of the church, and the influence example may have upon his fellow-christians, the law of charity and prudence will often require a believer to abstain from some things, not because they are unlawful, but inexpedient. Thus the apostle, though strenuous for the right of his christian liberty, would have abridged himself of the use, so as to eat no flesh, rather than offend a weak brother, rather than mislead him to act against

the present light of his conscience. Upon this principle, if I could, without hurt to myself, attend some public amusements, as a concert or oratorio, and return from thence with a warm heart to my closet (the possibility of which in my own case I greatly question); yet I should think it my duty to forbear, lest some weaker than myself should be encouraged by me to make the like experiment, though in their own minds they might fear it was wrong, and have no other reason to think it lawful but because I did it; in which case, I should suspect, that though I received no harm, they would. And I have known and conversed with some, who I fear have made shipwreck of their profession, who have dated their first decline from imitating others, whom they thought wiser and better than themselves, in such kind of compliances. And it seems that an obligation to this sort of self-denial rises and is strengthened in proportion to the weight and influence of our characters. Were I in private life, I do not know that I should think it sinful to kill a partridge or a hare; but, as a minister, I no more dare do it than I dare join in a drunken frolic, because I know it would give offence to some, and be pleaded for as a licence by others.

There is a duty, and a charity likewise, which we owe to the world at large, as well as a faithfulness to God and his grace, in our necessary converse among them. This seems to require, that though we should not be needlessly singular, yet, for their instruction, and for the honour of our Lord and Master, we should keep up a certain kind of singularity, and shew ourselves called to be a separated people;—that though the providence of God has given us callings and relations to fill up (in which we cannot be too exact), yet we are not of the world, but belong to another community, and act from other principles, by other rules, and to other ends, than the generality of those about us. I have observed, that the world will often leave professors in quiet possession of their notions and sentiments, and places of worship, provided they will not be too stiff in the matter of conformity with their more general customs and amusements. But I fear many of them have had their prejudices strengthened against our holy religion by such compliances, and have thought, that if there were such joy and comfort to be found in the ways of God as they hear from our pulpits, professors would not, in such numbers, and so often, run amongst them, to beg a relief from the burden of time hanging upon their hands. As our Lord Jesus is the great representative of his people in heaven, he does them the honour to continue a succession of them as his representatives upon earth. Happy are they who are favoured with most of the holy unction, and best enabled to manifest to all around them, by their spirit, tempers, and conversation, what is the proper design and genuine effect of his gospel upon the hearts of sinners.

In our way of little life in the country, serious people often complain of the snares they meet with from worldly people, and yet they must mix with them to get a livelihood. I advise them, if they can, to do their business with the world as they do it in the rain. If their business calls them abroad, they will not leave it undone for fear of being a little wet; but then, when it is done, they presently seek shelter, and will not stand in the rain for pleasure: so providential and necessary calls of duty, that lead us into the world, will not hurt us, if we find the spirit of the world unpleasant, and are glad to retire from it, and keep out of it as much as our relative duties will permit. That which is our cross is not so likely to be our snare; but if that spirit, which we should always watch and pray against, infects and assimilates our minds to itself, then we are sure to suffer loss, and act below the dignity of our profession.

The value of time is likewise to be taken into the account. It is a precious talent, and our christian profession opens a wide field for the due improvement of it. Much of it has been already lost, and therefore we are exhorted to redeem it. I think many things which custom pleads for will be excluded from a suitableness to a christian, for this one reason, that they are not consistent with the simplest notion of the redemption of time. It is generally said, we need relaxation: I allow it in a seuse: the Lord himself has provided it; and because our spirits are too weak to be always upon the wing in meditation and prayer, he has appointed to all men, from the king downwards, something to do in a secular way. The poor are to labour, the rich are not exempted from something equivalent. And when every thing of this sort in each person's situation is properly attended to, I apprehend, if the heart be alive and in a right state, spiritual concernments will present themselves, as affording the noblest, sweetest, and most interesting relaxation from the cares and business of life; as on the other hand, that business will be the best relaxation and unbending of the mind from religious exercises; and between the two, perhaps there ought to be but little mere leisure time. A life in this sense, divided between God and the world, is desirable; when one part of it is spent in retirement, seeking after and conversing with him whom our souls love; and the other part of it employed in active services for the good of our family, friends, the church, and society, for his sake. Every hour which does not fall in with one or other of these views, I apprehend is lost time.

The day in which we live seems likewise to call for something of a peculiar spirit in the

Lord's people. It is a day of abounding sin, and, I fear, a day of impending judgment. The world, as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, is secure. We are soon to have a day of apparent humiliation; but the just causes for it are not confined to one day, but will subsist, and too probably increase, every day. If I am not mistaken in the signs of the times, there never was, within the annals of the English history, a period in which the spirit and employment described, Ezek. ix. 4, could be more suitable than the present. The Lord calls for mourning and weeping; but the words of many are stout against him. New species of dissipation are invented almost daily, and the language of those who bear the greatest sway in what is called the polite circle, I mean the interpretative language of their hearts, is like that of the rebellious Jews, Jer. xliv. 16, 17, &c. "As for the word which thou hast spoken, we will not hearken unto thee at all." In short, things are coming to a point, and it seems to be almost putting to the vote, whether the Lord or Baal be God. In this state of affairs, methinks, we cannot be too explicit in avowing our attachment to the Lord, nor too careful in avoiding an improper correspondence with those who are in confederacy against him. We know not how soon we may greatly need that mark of providential protection which is restrained to those who sigh and cry for our abominations. Upon the whole, it appears to me, that it is more honourable, comfortable, and safe (if we cannot exactly hit the golden mean), to be thought by some too scrupulous and precise, than actually to be found too compliant with those things which, if not absolutely contrary to a divine commandment, are hardly compatible with the genius of the gospel, or conformable to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, which ought also to be in his people. The places and amusements which the world frequent and admire, where occasions and temptations to sin are cultivated, where the law of what is called good breeding is the only law which may not be violated with impunity, where sinful passions are provoked and indulged, where the fear of God is so little known or regarded, that those who do fear him must hold their tongues, though they should hear his name blasphemed, can hardly be a christian's voluntary chosen ground. Yet I fear these characters will apply to every kind of polite amusement or assembly in the kingdom.

As to family connexions, I cannot think we are bound to break or slight them. But as believers and their friends often live as it were in two elements, there is a mutual awkwardness, which makes their interviews rather dry and tedious. But, upon that account, they are less frequent than they would otherwise be, which seems an advantage. Both sides keep up returns of civility and affection; but as they cannot unite in sentiment and leading inclination, they will not contrive to be very often together, except there is something considerable given up by one or the other; and I think christians ought to be very cautious what concessions they make upon this account. But, as I said at the beginning, no general positive rules can be laid down.

I have simply given your Lordship such thoughts as have occurred to me while writing, without study, and without coherence. I dare not be dogmatical; but I think what I have written is agreeable both to particular texts, and to the general tenor of scripture. I submit it to your judgment.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

July — 1777.

MY LORD,

I OWE your Lordship a quire of letters for the favour and pleasure of your late visit; and therefore I must begin and write away.

I have lately read Robertson's History of Charles V., which, like most other histories, I consider as a comment upon those passages of scripture which teach us the depravity of man, the deceitfulness of the heart, the ruinous effects of sin, and the powerful, though secret rule of divine providence, moving, directing, and controuling the designs and actions of men, with an unerring hand, to the accomplishment of his own purposes, both of mercy and judgment. Without the clue and the light which the word of God affords, the history of mankind, of any, of every age, only presents to view a labyrinth and a chaos; a detail of wickedness and misery to make us tremble, and a confused jumble of interfering incidents, as destitute of stability, connection, or order, as the clouds which fly over our heads. In this view, *Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*, may serve as a motto to all the histories I have seen; but, with the scripture key, all is plain, all is instructive. Then I see verily there is a God, who governs the earth, who pours contempt upon princes, takes the wise in their own craftiness, over-rules the wrath and pride of man, to bring his own designs to pass, and restrains all that is not necessary to that end; blasting the best concerted enterprizes at one time, by means apparently slight, and altogether unexpected, and at other times producing the most important events, from instruments and circumstances which are, at first thought, too feeble and trivial to deserve notice. I should like to see a writer of Dr. Robertson's abilities give us a history upon this plan; but I think his reflections of this sort are too general, too cold, and too few. What an empty phantom do the great men of the world pursue, while

they wage war with the peace of mankind, and butcher, in the course of their lives, perhaps hundreds of thousands, to maintain the shadow of authority over distant nations, whom they can reach with no other influence than that of oppression and devastation! But when we consider those who are sacrificed to their ambition, as justly suffering for their sins, then heroes and conquerors appear in their proper light, and worthy to be classed with earthquakes and pestilences, as instruments of divine vengeance. So many cares, so much pains, so many mischiefs,—merely to support the idea a worm has formed of his own grandeur, is a proof that man, by nature, is not only depraved, but infatuated. Permit me to present my thoughts to more advantage in the words of M. Nicole:

"Un grand dans son idée n'est pas un seul homme; c'est un homme environ de tous ceux qui sont à lui, et qui s'imagine avoir autant de bras qu'ils en ont tous ensemble, parce qu'il en dispose et qu'il les remue. Un general d'armée se represente toujours à lui-même au milieu de tous ses soldats. Ainsi chacun tâche d'occuper le plus de place qu'il peut dans son imagination, et l'on ne se pousse, et ne s'aggrandit dans le monde, que pour augmenter l'idée que chacun se forme de soi-même. Voilà le but de tous les desseins ambitieux des hommes! Alexandre et Cæsar n'ont point eu d'autre vûe dans toutes leurs batailles que celle-là. Et si l'on demande pourquoi le Grand Seigneur a fait depuis peu perir cent mille hommes devant Candie, on peut repondre surement, que ce n'est que pour attacher encore cette image interieure qu'il a de lui-même, le titre de conquerant." *

How awful is the case of those who live and die in such a spirit, and who have multiplied miseries upon their fellow-creatures, in order to support and feed it! Perhaps they may, upon their entrance on another state, be accosted by multitudes, to the purport of that sarcastical language in the prophet's sublime ode of triumph over the king of Babylon, Is. xiv. 5–17.

Hic est, quem fuga, quem pavor
Præcessit? hic, quem terricolis gravis
Strages secuta est, vastitasque? hic
Attoniti spoliator orbis?

But though the effects of this principle of self are more extensive and calamitous, in proportion as those who are governed by it are more elevated, the principle itself is deep-rooted in every heart, and is the spring of every action, till grace infuses a new principle, and self, like Dagon, falls before the Lord of Hosts. Great and small are but relative terms; and the passions of discontent, pride, and envy, which, in the breast of a potentate, are severely felt by one half of Europe, exert themselves with equal strength in the heart of a peasant, though, for want of materials and opportunities, their operations are confined within narrow bounds. We are fallen into a state of gross idolatry, and self is the idol we worship.

I am, &c.

* Essais de Morale, vol. i.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND MR. S———.

LETTER I.

June 23, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE met with interruptions till now or you would have heard from me sooner. My thoughts have run much upon the subject of your last, because I perceive it has a near connection with your peace. Your integrity greatly pleases me; far be it from me to shake the principle of your conduct, yet in the application I think there is a possibility of carrying your exceptions too far.

From the account you give me of your sentiments, I cannot but wonder you find it so difficult to accede to the Athanasian Creed, when it seems to me you believe and avow what that Creed chiefly sets forth. The doctrine of the Trinity, some explication of the terms being subjoined, is the catholic faith, without the belief of which a man cannot be saved. This damnatory clause seems to me proved by Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth shall be saved," &c. The object of faith must be truth. The doctrine of the deity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, in union with the Father, so that they are not three Gods, but one God, is not merely a proposition expressed in words, to which our assent is required, but is absolutely necessary to be known, since without it no one truth respecting salvation can be rightly understood, no one promise duly be-"rved, no one duty spiritually performed. I ke it for granted, that this doctrine must pear irrational and absurd in the eye of rea-n, if by reason we mean the reason of man . his fallen state, before it is corrected and alightened by a heavenly teacher. No man n say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. believe, with you, that a man may be saved ho never heard of the Creed, who never read y book but the New Testament, or perhaps -ingle Evangelist; but he must be taught of God the things that accompany salvation, or I do not think he can be saved. The mercies of God in Christ will not save any, as I apprehend, but according to the method revealed in his word, that is, those who are truly partakers of faith and holiness. For, as the religion of the New Testament ascribes all power to God, and considers all goodness in us as the effect of his communication, we being by nature destitute of spiritual life or light, so those whom God himself is pleased to teach, will infallibly attain the knowledge of all that they are concerned to know. This teaching you are waiting for, and it shall be given you; yea the Lord, I trust, has begun to teach you already; but if you consider yourself as a learner, and that it is possible, under the Spirit's increasing illumination, you may hereafter adopt some things which at present you cannot approve, I should think it too early as yet to prescribe to yourself rules and determinations for the government of your future life. Should the will of God appoint you a new path for service, he may, sooner than you are aware, quiet your mind, and enable you to subscribe with as full a persuasion of mind as you now object to subscription. If it depended upon me, I could be content that the Creed should rest at the bottom of the sea, rather than embarrass a single person of your disposition. Nor am I a warm stickler for subscription in itself; but something of this kind seems necessary, upon the supposition of an establishment.

When I think of an inclosure, some hedge, wall, bank, ditch, &c is of course included in my idea; for who can conceive of an inclosure without a boundary? So, in a national church, there must be, I apprehend, something marked out, the approbation or refusal of which will determine who do or do

not belong to it; and for this purpose articles of some kind seem not improper. You think it would be better to have these articles in scriptural expressions. But if it be lawful to endeavour to exclude from our pulpits men who hold sentiments the most repugnant to the truth, I wish you to consider, whether this can be in any measure secured by articles in which the scripture-doctrines are not explained and stated, as well as expressed. This proposal is strenuously pleaded for by many in our day, upon views very different from yours. The Socinians, for instance, would readily subscribe a scriptural declaration of the high priesthood, atonement, and intercession of Christ (while they are allowed to put their own sense upon the terms), though the sense they maintain be utterly inconsistent with what those who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit learn from the same expressions.

I acknowledge, indeed, that the end is not answered by the present method; since there are too many, like the person you mention, who would easily subscribe nine hundred articles, rather than baulk his preferment: yet the profligacy of some seems to be no just reason why the church, why any church, should not be at liberty to define the terms upon which they will accept members or teachers, or why conscientious persons should object to these terms (if they think them agreeable to the truth), merely because they are not expressed in the precise words of scripture. If allowance may be made for human infirmity in the Liturgy, I see not why the Articles may not be entitled to the same privilege. For it seems requisite that we should be as well satisfied with the expressions we use with our lips, in frequent solemn prayer to God, as in what we subscribe with our hands. I am persuaded that the leaders of the Association at the Feathers Tavern, some of them at least, though they begin with the affair of subscription, would not (if they might have their wish) stop there, but would go on with their projected reform, till they had overturned the Liturgy also, or at least weeded it from every expression that bears testimony to the deity of the Saviour, and the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit. I bless God that you are far otherwise minded.

I hope, however, though you should not think yourself at liberty to repeat your subscription, the Lord will make you comfortable and useful in your present rank as a curate. Preferment is not necessary, either to our peace or usefulness. We may live and die contentedly, without the honours and emoluments which aspiring men thirst after, if he be pleased to honour us with a dispensation to preach his gospel, and to crown our endeavours with a blessing. He that winneth souls is wise; wise in the choice of the highest end he can propose to himself in this life; wise in the improvement of the only means by which this desireable end can be attained. Wherever we cast our eyes, the bulk of the people are ignorant, immoral, careless. They live without God in the world; they are neither awed by his authority, nor affected by his goodness, nor enabled to trust to his promises, nor disposed to aim at his glory. If, perhaps, they have a serious interval, or some comparative sobriety of character, they ground their hopes upon their own doings, endeavours, or purposes; and treat the inexpressible love of God revealed in Christ, and the gospel-method of salvation by faith in his name, with neglect, often with contempt. They have preachers, whom perhaps they hear with some pleasure, because they neither alarm their consciences by insisting on the spirituality and sanction of the divine law, nor offend their pride by publishing the humiliating doctrines of that gospel, which is the power of God through faith unto salvation. Therefore what they do speak, they speak in vain; the world grows worse and worse under their instructions; infidelity and profligacy abound more and more; for God will own no other doctrine but what the apostle calls the truth as it is in Jesus; that doctrine which drives the sinner from all his vain pleas, and points out the Lord Jesus Christ as the only ground of hope, the supreme object of desire, as appointed of God to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all who believe in his name. When ministers themselves are convinced of sin, and feel the necessity of an almighty Saviour, they presently account their former gain but loss, and determine, with the apostle, to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In proportion as they do this, they are sure to be wondered at, laughed at, and railed at, if the providence of God and the constitution of their country, secure them from severer treatment. But they have this invaluable compensation, that they no longer speak without effect. In a greater or less degree a change takes place in their auditories; the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed;—sinners are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God;—sinful practices are forsaken; and a new course of life in the converts, evidences that they have not followed cunningly-devised fables, or taken up with uncertain notions; but that God has indeed quickened them by his Spirit, and given them an understanding to know him that is true. The preachers, likewise, while they attempt to teach others, are taught themselves: a blessing descends upon their studies and labours, upon their perusal of the scriptures, upon their attention to what passes within them and around them. The events of every day contribute to throw light upon the word of God: their views of divine truth grow more enlarged, connected, and comprehensive; many difficulties, which

perplexed them at their first setting out, trouble them no more; the God whom they serve, and on whom they wait, reveals to them those great things, which, though plainly expressed in the letter of scripture, cannot be understood and realized without divine teaching, 1 Cor. ii. 9. to 15. Thus they go on from strength to strength; hard things become easy, and a divine light shines upon their paths. Opposition from men perhaps may increase; they may expect to be represented, as those who turn the world upside down; the cry, μεγαλη ἡ Αρτεμις*, will be raised against them, the gates of the temple of preferment will be seldom open to them; but they will have the unspeakable consolation of applying to themselves those lively words of the apostle, ὡς λυπουμενοι, ἀει δε χαιροντες, ὡς πτωχοι, πολλους δε πλουτιζοντες, ὡς μηδεν εχοντες, και παντα κατεχοντες.†

It is the strain of evident sincerity which runs through your letters, that gives me a pleasing confidence the Lord is with you. A disinterested desire of knowing the truth, with a willingness to follow it through all disadvantages, is a preparation of the heart which only God can give. He has directed you to the right method, searching the scriptures, with prayer. Go on, and may his blessing attend you. You may see, from what I have written above, what is the desire of my heart for you. But I am not impatient. Follow your heavenly leader, and in his own time and manner he will make your way plain. I have travelled the path before you, I see what you yet want; I cannot impart it to you, but he can, and I trust he will. It will rejoice my soul to be any way assistant to you; but I am afraid I should not afford you much, either profit or satisfaction, by entering upon a dry defence of creeds and articles.

The truths of scripture are not like mathematical theorems, which present exactly the same ideas to every person who understands the terms. The word of God is compared to a mirror, 2 Cor. iii. 18.: but it is a mirror in which the longer we look the more we see; the view will be still growing upon us; and still we shall see but in part while on this side eternity. When our Lord pronounced Peter blessed, declaring he had learnt that which flesh and blood could not have taught him, yet Peter was at that time much in the dark. The sufferings and death of Jesus, though the only and necessary means of his salvation, were an offence to him. But he lived to glory in what he once could not bear to hear of. Peter had received grace to love the Lord Jesus, to follow him, to venture all, and to forsake all for him; these first good dispositions were of God, and they led to further advances. So it is still. By nature, self rules in the heart: when this idol is brought low, and we are truly willing to be the Lord's, and to apply to him for strength and direction, that we may serve him, the good work is begun; for it is a truth that holds universally and without exception, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. The Lord first finds us when we are thinking of something else, Isaiah lxv. 1.; and then we begin to seek him in good earnest, and he has promised to be found of us. People may, by industry and natural abilities, make themselves masters of the external evidences of christianity, and have much to say for and against different schemes and systems of sentiments; but all this while the heart remains untouched. True religion is not a science of the head, so much as an inward and heartfelt perception, which casts down imaginations, and every ὑψωμα that exalteth itself in the mind, and brings every thought into a sweet and willing subjection to Christ by faith. Here the learned have no real advantage above the ignorant; both see when the eyes of the understanding are enlightened; till then both are equally blind. And the first lesson in the school of Christ is to become a little child, sitting simply at his feet, that we may be made wise unto salvation.

I was not only prevented beginning my letter so soon as I wished, but have been unusually interrupted since I began it. Often, as soon as I could well take the pen in hand, I have been called away to attend company and intervening business. Though I persuade myself, after what I have formerly said, you will put a favourable construction upon my delay, yet it has given me some pain. I set a great value upon your offer of friendship, which, I trust, will not be interrupted on either side, by the freedom with which we mutually express our difference of sentiments, when we are constrained to differ. You please me with entrusting me with the first rough draught of your thoughts; and you may easily perceive by my manner of writing, that I place equal confidence in your candour. I shall be glad to exchange letters as often as it suits us, without constraint, ceremony, or apology; and may he who is always present with our hearts make our correspondence useful. I pray God to be your sun and shield, your light and strength, to guide you with his eye, to comfort you with his gracious presence in your own soul, and to make you a happy instrument of comforting many.

I am, &c.

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* Great is Diana. † 2 Cor. vi. 10.

LETTER II.

July 14, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I GLADLY adopt your address, and can assure you that the interchange of every letter unites my heart more closely to you. I am glad to find that your views of articles and creeds are not likely to hinder you from going forward in your present situation; and if, without contracting your usefulness, they only prove a bar to your preferment, I am sure it will be no grief of mind to you at the hour of death, or the day of judgment, that you were enabled to follow the dictates of conscience, in opposition to all the pleas of custom or interest. Since, therefore, I have no desire of shaking your resolves, may we not drop this subject entirely? For, indeed, I act but an awkward part in it, being by no means myself an admirer of articles and creeds, or disposed to be a warm advocate for church-power. The propriety of our national establishment, or of any other, is what I have not much to do with; I found it as it is, nor have I influence to alter it were I willing. The question in which I was concerned was simply, Whether I, *rebus sic stantibus*, could submit to it, so as conscientiously to take a designation to the ministry under it? I thought I could; I accordingly did, and I am thankful that I never have seen cause to repent it.

You seem gently to charge me with a want of candour in what I observed or apprehended concerning the gentlemen of the Feathers Tavern. If I mistake not (for I retain no copies of my letters), I expressed myself with a double restriction, by first saying "the leaders of that society," and then adding, "or some of them at least." I apprehend your candour will hardly lead you to suppose that there are none amongst them who would pull down the whole fabric, that is, I mean so far as it crosses the Socinian scheme, if it was left to their choice. I apprehend, I may, without the least breach of candour, suppose that the exceptions which Mr. Lindsay has made to the Liturgy are not peculiar to himself. It seems plain in his case, and from his own writings, that the mere removal of subscriptions, which is the immediate and ostensible object of the clerical petition, could not have satisfied him; and it is past a doubt with me, that there are others of the clergy like minded with him. Indeed, I could wish to be thought candid by you; though, I confess, I am not a friend to that lukewarmness and indifference for truth, which bears the name of candour among many in the present day. I desire to maintain a spirit of candour and benevolence to all men, to wish them well, to do them every good office in my power, and to commend what appears to me commendable in a Socinian, as readily as in a Calvinist. But with some people I can only go *usque ad aras*. I must judge of principles by the word of God, and of the tree by its fruit. I meddle with no man's final state; because I know that he who is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, can do it whenever, and to whomsoever he is pleased: yet I firmly believe, and I make no scruple of proclaiming it, that swearers, drunkards, adulterers, continuing such, cannot inherit the kingdom of God; and I look with no less compassion upon some persons, whose characters in common life may be respectable, when I see them unhappily blinded by their own wisdom; and while they account themselves, and are accounted by many others, master-builders in Zion, rejecting the only foundation upon which a sinner's hope can be safely built.

I am far from thinking the Socinians all hypocrites, but I think they are all in a most dangerous error; nor do their principles exhibit to my view a whit more of the genuine fruits of christianity than deism itself. You say, "If they be sincere, and fail not for want of diligence in searching, I cannot help thinking, that God will not condemn them for an inevitable defect in their understandings." Indeed, my friend, I have such a low opinion of man in his depraved state, that I believe no one has real sincerity in religious matters till God bestows it; and when he makes a person sincere in his desires after truth, he will assuredly guide him to the possession of it in due time, as our Lord speaks, John vi. 44, 45. To suppose that any persons can sincerely seek the way of salvation, and yet miss it through an inevitable defect of their understandings, would contradict the plain promises of the gospel, such as Matth. vii. 7, 8, John vii. 16, 17; but to suppose that nothing is necessary to be known which some persons who profess sincerity cannot receive, would be in effect to make the scriptures a nose of wax, and open a wide door for scepticism. I am not a judge of the heart; but I may be sure, that whoever makes the foundation-stone a rock of offence cannot be sincere in his inquiries. He may study the scriptures accurately, but he brings his own preconceived sentiments with him, and, instead of submitting them to the touchstone of truth, he makes them a rule by which he interprets. That they who lean to their own understandings should stumble and miscarry, I cannot wonder; for the same God who has promised to fill the hungry with good things, has threatened to send the rich empty away. So Matth. xi. 25. It is not through defect of understanding, but a want of simplicity and humility, that so many stumble like the blind at noon-day, and can see nothing of those great truths which are written in the gospel as with a sun-beam.

You wish me to explain myself concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. I will try; yet I know I cannot, any farther than as he who taught me shall be pleased to bear witness in your heart to what I say. My first principle in religion is what the scriptures teach me of the utter depravity of human nature, in connection with the spirituality and sanction of the law of God. I believe we are by nature sinners, by practice universally transgressors; that we are dead in trespasses and sins; and that the bent of our natural spirit is enmity against the holiness, government, and grace of God. Upon this ground, I see, feel, and acknowledge the necessity of such a salvation as the gospel proposes, which, at the same time that it precludes boasting, and stains the pride of all human glory, affords encouragement to those who may be thought, or who may think themselves, the weakest or the vilest of mankind. I believe, that whatever notions a person may take up from education or system, no one ever did, or ever will feel himself and own himself to be such a lost, miserable, hateful sinner, unless he be powerfully and supernaturally convinced by the Spirit of God. There is, when God pleases, a certain light thrown into the soul, which differs, not merely in degree but in kind, *toto genere*, from any thing that can be effected or produced by moral suasion or argument. But (to take in another of your queries) the Holy Spirit teaches or reveals no new truths, either of doctrine or precept, but only enables us to understand what is already revealed in the scriptures. Here a change takes place; the person that was spiritually blind begins to see. The sinner's character, as described in the word of God, he finds to be a description of himself; that he is afar off, a stranger, a rebel; that he has hitherto lived in vain. Now he begins to see the necessity of an atonement, an advocate, a shepherd, a comforter; he can no more trust to his own wisdom, strength, and goodness, but, accounting all his former gain but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, he renounces every other refuge, and ventures his all upon the person, work, and promise of the Redeemer. In this way, I say he will find the doctrine of the Trinity not only a proposition but a principle; that is, from his own wants and situation he will have an abiding conviction that the Son and Holy Spirit are God, and must be possessed of the attributes nd powers of Deity, to support the offices he scriptures assign them, and to deserve he confidence and worship the scriptures re- uire to be placed in them, and paid to em. Without this awakened state of mind, divine, reputed orthodox, will blunder retchedly even in defending his own opi- ions. I have seen laboured defences of the rinity, which have given me not much more atisfaction than I should probably receive from a dissertation upon the rainbow, composed by a man blind from his birth. In effect, the knowledge of God cannot be attained by studious discussion on our parts; it must be by a revelation on his part, Matth. xi. 27. and xvi. 17; a revelation, not objectively of new truth, but subjectively of new light in us. Then he that runs may read. Perhaps you may not quite understand my meaning, or not accede to my sentiments at present; I have little doubt, however, but the time is coming when you will. I believe the Lord God has given you that sincerity which he never disappoints.

Far be it from me to arrogate infallibility to myself, or to any writer or preacher; yet blessed be God, I am not left to float up and down the uncertain tide of opinion, in those points wherein the peace of my soul is nearly concerned. I know, yea I infallibly know whom I have believed. I am under no more doubt about the way of salvation than of the way to London. I cannot be deceived, because the word of God cannot deceive me. It is impossible, however, for me to give you, or any person, full satisfaction concerning my evidence, because it is of an experimental nature, Rev. ii. 17. In general, it arises from the views I have received of the power, compassion, and grace of Jesus, and a consciousness that I, from a conviction of my sin and misery, have fled to him for refuge, entrusted and devoted myself and my all to him. Since my mind has been enlightened, every thing within me, and every thing around me, confirms and explains to me what I read in scripture; and though I have reason enough to distrust my own judgment every hour, yet I have no reason to question the great essentials, which the Lord himself hath taught me.

Besides a long letter, I send you a great book. A part of it, for I do not ask you to read the whole, may perhaps explain my meaning better than I have leisure to do myself. I set a high value upon this book of Mr. Halyburton's; so that, unless I could replace it with another, I know not if I would part with it for its weight in gold. The first and longest treatise is, in my judgment a masterpiece; but I would chiefly wish you to peruse the Essay concerning Faith, towards the close of the book. I need not beg you to read it carefully, and to read it all. The importance of the subject, its immediate connection with your inquiries, and the accuracy of the reasoning, will render the motive of my request unnecessary. I cannot style him a very elegant writer; and, being a Scotchman, he abounds with the Scottish idiom; but you will prefer truth to ornament. I long to hear your opinion of it. It seems to me so adapted to some things that have passed between us as if written on purpose.

The Inquiry concerning Regeneration and

Justification, which stands last in the book, I do not desire, or even wish you to read; but if you should, and then think that you have read a speculation more curious than useful, I shall not contradict you. I think it must appear to you in that light; but it was bound up with the rest, and therefore could not stay behind; but I hope the Essay on Faith will please you.

I take great pleasure in your correspondence, still more in the thought of your friendship, which I hope to cultivate to the utmost, and to approve myself sincerely and affectionately yours.

LETTER III.

August 11, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

NEXT week I go to London, where I purpose, if nothing unforeseen prevents, to stay a month. Many things, which must necessarily be attended to before my departure, abridge me of that leisure which I could wish to employ in answering your last. However, I will spare you what I can. I thank you for yours. Your objections neither displease nor weary me. While truth is the object of your inquiry, the more freedom you use with me the better. Nor do they surprise me; for I have formerly made the like objections myself. I have stood upon your ground, and I continue to hope you will one day stand upon mine. As I have told you more than once, I do not mean to dictate to you, or wish you to receive any thing upon my *ipse dixit*; but, in the simplicity of friendship, I will give you my thoughts from time to time upon the points you propose, and leave the event to the divine blessing.

I am glad you do not account the Socinians master-builders. However, they esteem themselves so, and are so esteemed, not only by a few, as you think, but by many. I fear Socinianism spreads rapidly amongst us, and bids fair to be the prevailing scheme in this land, especially with those who profess to be the thinking part. The term Arminian, as at present applied, is very indiscriminate, and takes in a great variety of persons and sentiments, amongst whom, I believe, there are many who hold the fundamental truths of the gospel, and live a life of faith in the Son of God. I am far from supposing that God will guide every sincere person exactly to adopt all my sentiments. But there are some sentiments which I believe essential to the very state and character of a true christian. And these make him a christian, not merely by being his acknowledged sentiments, but by a certain peculiar manner in which he possesses them. There is a certain important change takes place in the heart, by the operation of the Spirit of God, before the soundest and most orthodox sentiments can have their proper influence upon us. This work, or change, the scriptures describe by various names, each of which is designed to teach us the marvellous effects it produces, and the almighty power by which it is produced. It is sometimes called a new birth, John iii. 3; sometimes a new creature, or a new creation, as 2 Cor. v. 17; sometimes the causing light to shine out of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 6; sometimes the opening the eyes of the blind, Acts xxvi. 18; sometimes the raising the dead to life, Ephes. ii. 5. Till a person has experienced this change, he will be at a loss to form a right conception of it: but it means, not being proselyted to an opinion, but receiving a principle of divine life and light in the soul. And till this is received, the things of God, the truths of the gospel cannot be rightly discerned or understood by the utmost powers of fallen man, who, with all his wisdom, reason, and talents, is still but what the apostle calls the natural man, till the power of God visits his heart, 1 Cor. ii. 14. This work is sometimes wrought suddenly, as in the case of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14; at other times very gradually. A person who before was a stranger even to the form of godliness, or, at best, content with a mere form, finds new thoughts arising in his mind, feels some concern about his sins, some desire to please God, some suspicions that all is not right. He examines his views of religion, hopes the best of them, and yet cannot rest satisfied in them. To-day, perhaps, he thinks himself fixed; to-morrow he will be all uncertainty. He inquires of others; weighs, measures, considers, meets with sentiments which he had not attended to, thinks them plausible; but is presently shocked with objections or supposed consequences, which he finds himself unable to remove. As he goes on in his inquiry, his difficulties increase. New doubts arise in his mind; even the scriptures perplex him, and appear to assert contrary things. He would sound the depths of truth by the plummet of his reason; but he finds his line is too short. Yet even now the man is under a guidance, which will at length lead him right. The importance of the subject takes up his thoughts, and takes off the relish he once had for the things of the world. He reads, he prays, he strives, he resolves; sometimes inward embarrassments and outward temptations bring him to his wits end. He almost wishes to stand where he is, and inquire no more; but he cannot stop. At length he begins to feel the inward depravity, which he had before owned as an opinion; a sense of sin and guilt cuts him out new work. Here reasoning will stand him in no stead. This is a painful change of mind; but it prepares the way for a blessing. It silences some objections better than a thousand arguments, it cuts the comb of his own

wisdom and attainments, it makes him weary of working for life, and teaches him, in God's due time, the meaning of that text, "To him that worketh not, but believeth in him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Then he learns that scriptural faith is a very different thing from a rational assent to the gospel,— that it is the immediate gift of God (Ephes. ii. 8); the operation of God (Col. ii. 12); that Christ is not only the object, but the author and finisher of faith (Heb. xii. 2); and that faith is not so properly a part of that obedience we owe to God, as an inestimable benefit we receive from him, for Christ's sake (Phil. i. 29), which is the medium of our justification (Rom. v. 1), and the principle by which we are united to Christ, as the branch to the vine (John xvii. 21). I am well aware of the pains taken to put a different sense upon these and other seemingly mysterious passages of scripture; but thus far we speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen. I have described a path in which I have known many led, and in which I have walked myself.

The gospel, my dear Sir, is a salvation appointed for those who are ready to perish, and is not designed to put them in a way to save themselves by their own works. It speaks to us as condemned already, and calls upon us to believe in a crucified Saviour, that we may receive redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. And the Spirit of God, by the gospel, first convinces us of unbelief, sin, and misery; and then, by revealing the things of Jesus to our minds, enables us, as helpless sinners, to come to Christ, to receive him, to behold him, or, in other words, to believe in him, and expect pardon, life, and grace from him; renouncing every hope and aim in which we once rested, and accounting all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, John vi. 35; Is. xlv. 22, with John vi. 40; Col. ii. 6. In some of Omicron's letters you will find my thoughts more at large upon these subjects than I have now time to write them. For a farther illustration, I refer you to the MSS. sent herewith. The first part, written in short hand, does not so immediately concern our present point as the second, which you may read without a key. It relates to a matter of indisputable fact, concerning a person with whom, as you will perceive, I was well acquainted. You may depend upon the truth of every tittle. I entrust it to you in the confidence of friendship, and beg that it may not go out of your hands, and that, when you have perused it, you will return it, sealed up, by a safe conveyance, to my house. You will see in it the sentiments of a man of great learning, sound reasoning, an amiable and irreproachable character, and how little he accounted of all these advantages, when the Lord was pleased to enlighten his mind.

Though we have not exactly the same views of human depravity, yet as we both agree to take our measure of it from the word of God, I trust we shall not always differ about it. Adam was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, Ephes. iv. 24. This moral image, I believe, was totally lost by sin. In that sense he died the day, the moment, he ate the forbidden fruit. God was no longer his joy and delight; he was averse from the thoughts of his presence, and would, if possible, have hid himself from him. His natural powers, though doubtless impaired, were not destroyed. Man, by nature, is still capable of great things. His understanding, reason, memory, imagination, &c. sufficiently proclaim that the hand that made him is divine. He is, as Milton says of Beelzebub, majestic, though in ruins. He can reason, invent, and, by application, attain a considerable knowledge in natural things. The exertions of human genius, as specified in the characters of some philosophers, poets, orators, &c. are wonderful. But man cannot know, love, trust, or serve his Maker, unless he be renewed in the spirit of his mind. God has preserved in him likewise some feelings of benevolence, pity, some sense of natural justice and truth, &c. without which there could be no society: but these, I apprehend, are little more than instincts, by which the world is kept in some small degree of order; but, being under the direction of pride and self, do not deserve the name of virtue and goodness; because the exercise of them does not spring from a principle of love to God, nor is directed to his glory, or regulated by the rule of his word, till a principle of grace is superadded. You think I will not say, "that God judicially, in punishment of one man's sin, added these corruptions to all his posterity." Let us suppose, that the punishment annexed to eating the forbidden fruit had been the loss of Adam's rational powers, and that he should be degraded to the state and capacity of a brute. In this condition, had he begotten children, after the fall, in his own likeness, his nature being previously changed, they must have been of course brutes like himself; for he could not convey to them those original powers which he had lost. Will this illustrate my meaning? Sin did not deprive him of rationality, but of spirituality. His nature became earthly, sensual, yea devilish; and this fallen nature, this carnal mind, which is enmity against God, which is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be (Rom. viii. 7), we universally derive from him. Look upon children; they presently shew themselves averse from good, but exceedingly propense to evil. This they can learn even without a master; but ten thousand instructors and instructions cannot instil good into them, so as to teach them to love their Creator, unless a divine power co-operates. Just as it is with

the earth, which produces weeds spontaneously; but if you see a cabbage, or an apple-tree, you are sure it was planted or sown there, and did not spring from the soil. I know many hard questions may be started upon this subject, but the Lord, in due time, will clear his own cause, and vindicate his own ways. I leave all difficulties with him. It is sufficient for me that scripture asserts, and experience proves, that it is thus in fact, Rom. iii. 9—21; Job. xiv. 4. Thus we have not only forfeited our happiness by transgression, but are, by our depravity, incapable of it, and have no more desire or taste for such a state as the scriptures describe heaven to be, than a man born deaf can have for a concert of music. And therefore our Lord declares, that except a man be born again, he not only shall not, but cannot, see the kingdom of God. Hence a twofold necessity of a Saviour—his blood for the pardon of our sins, and his life, spirit, and grace, to quicken our souls, and form us anew for himself, that we may feel his love, and shew forth his praise.

St. Paul, before his conversion, was not sincere, in the sense I hope you to be. He thought himself in the right, without doubt, as many have done when they killed God's servants, John xvi. 2. He was blindly and obstinately zealous. I think he did not enter into the merits of the cause, or inquire into facts with that attention which sincerity would have put him upon. You think that his sincerity and zeal were the very things that made him a chosen instrument; he himself speaks of them as the very things that made him peculiarly unworthy of that honour (1 Cor. xv. 9.); and he tells us, that he was set forth as a pattern of the Lord's long-suffering and mercy, that the very chief of sinners might be encouraged, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. Had he been sincerely desirous to know whether Jesus was the Messiah, there was enough in his character, doctrines, miracles, and the prophecies concerning him, to have cleared up the point; but he took it for granted he was right in his opinion, and hurried blindly on, and was, as he said himself, exceedingly mad against them. Such a kind of sincerity is common enough. People believe themselves right, and therefore treat others with scorn or rage, appeal to the scriptures, but first lay down their own preconceived sentiments for truths, and then examine what scriptures they can find to countenance them. Surely a person's thinking himself right, will not give a sanction to all that he does under that persuasion.

Ignorance and obstinacy are in themselves sinful, and no plea of sincerity will exempt from the danger of being under their influence, Is. xxvii. 11, Luke vi. 39. It appears to me, that, though you will not follow any man implicitly, you are desirous of discovering your mistakes, supposing you are mistaken in any point of importance. You read and examine the word of God, not to find arms wherewith to defend your sentiments at all events, but to know whether they are defensible or not. You pray for God's light and teaching, and in this search you are willing to risk what men are commonly much afraid of hazarding—character, interest, preferment, favour, &c. A sincerity of this kind I too seldom meet with: when I do, I account it a token for good, and am ready to say, "No man can do this, except God be with him." However, sincerity is not conversion; but I believe it is always a forerunner of it.

I would not be uncharitable and censorious, hasty and peremptory in judging my fellow-creatures. But if I acknowledge the word of God, I cannot avoid forming my judgment upon it. It is true, I cannot look into people's hearts; but hearts and principles are delineated to my hand in the scriptures. I read, that no murderer has eternal life in him; I read likewise, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema;" and therefore I conclude, that there are speculative errors, as heinous in their guilt, as destructive in their effects, as murder; and that the most moral, regular man, as to social life, if he loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, is in the sight of God, the judge of all, as displeasing as a murderer. It has pleased God, for the peace and support of society, to put a black mark upon those sins which affect the peace and welfare of our neighbour, such as adultery and murder. But undoubtedly the sins committed immediately against himself must be more heinous than any which offend our fellow-creatures. The second commandment (Matth. xxii. 39.), is like the first; but it depends upon it, and is therefore inferior to it. Men ordinarily judge otherwise. To live regardless of God and the gospel is looked upon as a mere pecadillo in comparison with offences against society. But sooner or later it will appear otherwise to all. A parcel of robbers may pique themselves upon the justice, honour, and truth they observe towards one another; but, because they set up a petty interest, which is inconsistent with the public good, they are deservedly accounted villains, and treated as such, notwithstanding their petty morality among themselves. Now such a company of robbers bears a much greater proportion to a whole nation, than a nation, or all the nations of the earth, bears to the great God. Our dependence upon him is absolute, our obligations to him infinite. In vain shall men plead their moral discharge of relative duties to each other, if they fail in the unspeakably greater relation under which they stand to God; and therefore, when I see people living without God in the world, as all do till they are converted, I cannot but judge them in a dangerous state;—not because I take pleasure in censuring, or think myself

authorised to pass sentence upon my fellow-creatures, but because the scriptures decide expressly on the case, and I am bound to take my sentiments from thence.

The jailor was certainly a christian when baptised, as you observe. He trembled; he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did not bid him amend his life, but believe in the Lord Jesus. He believed and rejoiced. But the Lord blessed the apostle's words, to produce in him that saving faith which filled him with joy and peace. It was, as I observed before, something more than an assent to the proposition, that Jesus is the Christ; a resting in him for forgiveness and acceptance, and a cleaving to him in love. No other faith will purify the heart, work by love, and overcome the world.

I need not have pleaded want of leisure as an excuse for a short letter, for I have written a long one. I feel myself much interested in your concerns; and your unexpected frank application to me (though you well know the light in which I appear to some people) I consider as a providential call, which binds me to your service. I hope our correspondence will be productive of happy effects, and that we shall both one day rejoice in it.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

September 6, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I BEGIN to fear I shall fall under a suspicion of unkindness and forgetfulness towards you, and therefore I am willing to write a line by way of prevention, though I have not leisure to attempt any thing like an answer to the letter you put into my hand the evening before I left O——; I must therefore content myself with a tender of affection and respect, and an inquiry after your welfare.

Your letter will give me an opportunity of saying something farther when time shall admit; but an endeavour to answer all the objections that may be started between us, in a way of reasoning, would require a volume, and would likewise interfere with the leading principle upon which my hope of giving you satisfaction in due time is grounded. You seem to expect that I should remove your difficulties; but it is my part only to throw in a word occasionally, as a witness of what the Lord has been pleased to teach me from the scriptures, and to wait for the rest till he (who alone is able) shall be pleased to communicate the same views to you: for, till we see and judge by the same medium, and are agreed in the fundamental point, that faith is not the effect of reasoning, but a special gift of God, which he bestows when and to whom he pleases, it will not be possible for me to convince you by dint of argument. I believe, as I have observed before, that he has already given you a desire to know his will, and therefore I trust he will not disappoint your search. At present I think you want one thing, which it is not in my power to impart, I mean, such a sense of the depravity of human nature, and the state of all mankind considered as sinners, as may make you feel the utter impossibility of attaining to the peace and hope of the gospel in any other way, than by renouncing all hope of succeeding by any endeavours of your own, farther than by humbly waiting at the throne of grace, for power to cast yourself, without terms and conditions, upon him who is able to save to the uttermost. We must feel ourselves sick, before we can duly prize the great Physician, and feel a sentence of death in ourselves, before we can effectually trust in God, who raiseth the dead.

I have not brought your sermons with me, for I thought I should not have time to read them attentively while in this hurrying place. I purpose to consider them with care, and to give you my thoughts with frankness, when I return. However, if they are upon the plan intimated in your letter, I will venture to say one thing beforehand, that they will not answer your desired end. I am persuaded you wish to be useful—to reclaim sinners from their evil ways—to inspire them with a love to God, and a sincere aim to walk in obedience to his will. May I not venture to appeal to yourself, that you meet with little success,—that the people to whom you preach, though they perhaps give you a patient hearing, yet remain as they were, unchanged, and unholy? It must be so: there is but one sort of preaching which God blesses to these purposes, that which makes all the world guilty before God, and sets forth Jesus Christ, as the brazen serpent was proposed by Moses, that guilty and condemned sinners, by looking to him, and believing on his name, may be healed and saved. The most pressing exhortations to repentance and amendment of life, unless they are enforced in a certain way, which only God can teach, will leave our hearers much as they find them. When we meet, or when I have leisure to write from home, I will trouble you with my thoughts more at large. Till then, permit me to assure you of my sincere regard and best wishes, and that

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

October 21, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE calls and engagements which I told you engrossed and anticipated my time when I wrote last, have continued without any intermission hitherto, and I am still far behind hand with my business. I am willing to hope, that the case has been much the same with you, and that want of leisure has been the only cause of my not having been pleasured with so much as a note from you since my return from London.

I am loath, for my own sake, to charge your silence to any unwillingness of continuing that intercourse which I have been, and still find myself, desirous to improve on my part. For though we are not agreed in our views; yet, while our preliminary agreement, to allow mutual freedom, and to exercise mutual candour, in expressing our sentiments, subsists, we may, and I hope shall be glad to hear from each other. It may seem to intimate I have a better opinion of myself than of you, that while I seem confident your freedom will not offend me, I feel now and then a fear, lest mine should prove displeasing to you. But friendship is a little suspicious when exercised with long silence, and a plain declaration of my sentiments has more than once put amiable and respectable persons to the full trial of their patience.

I now return your sermons; I thank you for the perusal; I see much in them that I approve, and nothing in them but what I formerly espoused. But in a course of years, a considerable alteration has taken place in my judgment and experience, I hope, yea, I may boldly say, I am sure, not for the worse. Then I was seeking, and now, through mercy, I have found, the pearl of great price. It is both the prayer and the hope of my heart, that a day is coming when you shall make the same acknowledgement. From your letters and sermons, I am encouraged to address you in our Lord's words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." I am persuaded the views you have received will not suffer you to remain where you are. But fidelity obliges me to add, "Yet one thing thou lackest." That one thing, I trust the Lord will both shew you, and bestow upon you, in his due time. You speak somewhere of "atoning for disobedience by repentance." Ah! my dear Sir, when we are brought to estimate our disobedience, by comparing it with such a sense of the majesty, holiness, and authority of God, and the spirituality, extent, and sanction of his holy law, as he, and he only, can impress upon the heart of a sinner, we shall be convinced, that nothing but the blood of the Son of God can atone for the smallest instance of disobedience.

I intimated, in my letter from London, one defect of your scheme, which will probably be the first to engage your notice. I am sure you have a desire to be useful to the souls of men, to be an instrument of reclaiming them from that course of open wickedness, or lifeless formality, in which you see them enslaved; and, in a word, to prevail with them to live soberly, righteously, and godly, according to the just and comprehensive sense you have given of those words, in your sermon on Tit. ii. 11 12. Now, inward experience, and a pretty extensive observation of what passes abroad, have so perfectly convinced me there is but one mode of preaching which the Holy Spirit owns to the producing of these effects, that I am not afraid to pronounce confidently, you will not have the desires of your heart gratified upon your present plan. The people will give you a hearing, and remain just as they are, till the Lord leads you to speak to them as criminals condemned already, and whose first essential step it is, to seek forgiveness by the blood of Jesus, and a change of heart and state by his grace, before they can bring forth any fruit acceptable to God.

As I have little time for writing, and little hope of succeeding in a way of argumentation, I have substituted, instead of a longer letter, the heads of some sermons I preached nine or ten years ago, on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. However, when I have heard that you are well, and that you are still disposed to correspond with me, I shall be ready to give a more particular answer to the subjects you pointed out to me in the letter you favoured me with the day before I left London. I pray God to bless you in all your ways, and beg you to believe, that I am, with sincerity, &c.

LETTER VI.

October 28.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT never entered my pericranium, that you expected I should fully and directly answer your letter while I was in London; and yet you reasonably might, as you knew nothing of my engagements: but, indeed, it was impracticable; I could only send you a hasty line, as a token that I remembered you. I informed you, when I returned, that I was just going out again. Since I came home the second time, I have been engrossed by things that would admit of no delay; and, at length, not having so much as a note from you, I thought I would wait till I heard farther. But, from first to last it was my intention

and I think, my promise, to answer in the manner you proposed, as soon as I could. And even now I must beg a little longer time. Believe me, that as the wise and good providence of God brought us together, without any expectation of mine, I will do all in my power to preserve the connection, and particularly by giving my thoughts on such questions as you propose. And though, to consider your questions in the manner you wish, and to point out the agreement of detached texts (as they occur) with my views, seems, in prospect, to require a volume rather than a sheet, yet I am not discouraged; only I beg you to make allowances for other things, and to be assured, that before I had the pleasure of corresponding with you, I had very little spare time. Expect then the best satisfaction I am able to give you, as soon as possible. To prepare the way, I will try hard for a little leisure, to give you a few thoughts upon yours, which came last night.

You complain that I have hitherto disappointed your expectations. If you have preserved my first papers, I believe you will find, that I apprised you this might probably be the event, and certainly must, unless it should please God to make what I should write a means of giving you the same views with myself. I only proposed, as a witness, to bear a simple testimony to what I have seen and known. So far as you believed me sincere and unwilling to impose upon you, I thought you might admit, there was perhaps some weight in what I advanced, though for the present, you could not see things in the same light. And if you allowed a possibility, that my changing the sentiments which I once held in common with yourself, might be upon sufficient grounds, you would, as I trust you do, wait upon the great Teacher for his instruction; otherwise I did not expect to convince you, nor do I yet, only I am glad to put myself in his hands as an instrument.

You quite misunderstood what I spoke of the light and influence of the Spirit of God. He reveals to me no new truths, but has only shown me the meaning of his own written word; nor is this light a particular revelation, it is common to all who are born again. And thus, though you and I cannot fully agree about it, yet I almost daily meet with persons from the east, west, north, and south, whom, though I never saw them before, I find we understand each other at once. This (as you bid me be explicit) is the one thing which I think you at present lack. And I limited my expression to one thing, because it is our Lord's expression, and because that one thing includes many. As I said before, I cannot give it you; but the Lord can: and from the desire he has raised in your heart, I have a warm hope that he will. You place the whole stress of your inquiries upon reason: I am far from discarding reason, when it is enlightened and sanctified; but spiritual things must be spiritually discerned, and can be received and discerned no other way; for to our natural reason they are foolishness, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.; Matth. xi. 25. This certain something I can no more describe to those who have not experienced it, than I could describe the taste of a pine-apple to a person who had never seen one. But scriptural proofs might be adduced in abundance, yet not so as to give a solid conviction of it, till we actually experience it. Thus it was with my friend, whose case I sent you. When God gave him the key, as he expressed it, then the scriptures were unlocked. His wishing himself a deist some time before, was not from any libertine exceptions he made to the precepts of the gospel, but from the perplexing embarrassments he had found, by endeavouring to understand the doctrines by dint of reason, though reason in him was as strong and penetrating as in most men I ever met with. Upon your present plan, how can I hope to satisfy you, though even St. Paul asserts it, that the carnal mind is enmity against God? You will readily agree with me to the proposition as it stands in St. Paul's words, but I think you will not so readily assent to what I have no more doubt than of my own existence, is the sense of it, That the heart of man, of any man, every man, however apparently amiable in his outward conduct, how ever benevolent to his fellow-creatures, how ever abundant and zealous in his devotions is by nature enmity against God; not indeed against the idea he himself forms of God, but against the character which God has revealed of himself in the scriptures. Man is an enemy to the justice, sovereignty, and law of God, and to the alone method of salvation he has appointed in the gospel by faith only; by such a faith, as it is no more in his power to contribute to the production of in himself, than he can contribute to raising the dead, or making a world. Whatever is of the flesh is flesh, and can rise no higher than its principle; but the Lord could convince you of this by a glance of thought.

But I must break off, for want both of room and time. Let me remind you of our agreement, to use and to allow the greatest freedom, and not to be offended with what is meant well on either side. Something in your last letter made me apprehensive you were a little displeased with me. He that knows my heart, knows that I wish you well as my own soul.

The expression, of atoning for disobedience by repentance, was in one of your sermons. I considered it as unguarded; but on my view of things, it were in a manner impossible I could use that expression, though perhaps, too often unguarded myself.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

November 17, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AT length I take up your favour of August 14, with design to give it a more explicit answer. My delaying hitherto has been unavoidable; I am sorry to have your patience put to so long a trial, and should be more sorry, but that I consider, that in my former papers, sermons, Omicron's letters, &c. you already possess the whole (in substance) of what I have to offer. My present part is but *actum agere*, to repeat what I have elsewhere expressed, only with some variety and enlargement. You yourself well state the situation of our debate, when you say, "Nor in truth do you offer any arguments to convince me, nor does it seem very consistent on your grounds so to do. And if this important change is to be brought about by the intervention of some extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be brought about without it; I do not see any thing farther that I have to do, than to keep my mind as much unbiased as I can, and to wait and pray for it." I think my letter from London was to the purport of these your own words, though you seemed dissatisfied with it. While we see through a different medium, it will be easy for you to answer every text I might adduce in support of my sentiments, as you have those I have already brought, "That you understand them otherwise." In order to support my sense of one text, I should perhaps quote and argue from twenty more, and still "you would understand them otherwise." The life of man, yea, of Methuselah, would hardly suffice to prove, object, and defend, all that might be alledged on both sides in this way; and at last we should leave off as we began, more fully confirmed in our own opinions, unless the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, should be pleased to shew the person who maintained the wrong side of the argument where his mistake lay. However, I mean to take some notice of your queries as they offer themselves.

The first which occurs is complicated. The substance I think is, Whether such belief and aims as you possess, will stand you in no stead unless you likewise believe grace irresistible, predestination absolute, faith in supernatural impulses, &c.? You may have observed, I have several times waved speaking about predestination or election, not that I am ashamed of the doctrine; because, if it be indeed absurd, shocking, and unjust, the blame will not deservedly fall upon me, for I did not invent it, but upon the scriptures, where I am sure it is laid down in as plain terms, as that God created the heavens and the earth. I own I cannot but wonder, that persons professing any reverence for the Bible should so openly and strongly declare their abhorrence of what the Bible so expressly teaches; namely, that there is a discrimination of persons by the grace and good pleasure of God, where by nature there is no difference; and that all things respecting the salvation of these persons is infallibly secured by a divine predestination.

I do not offer this as a rational doctrine, though it be highly so to me; but it is scriptural, or else the scriptures are a mere nose of wax, and without a determinate meaning. What ingenuity is needful to interpret many passages in a sense more favourable to our natural prejudices against God's sovereignty! Matth. xi. 25, 26, and xiii. 10—17; Mark xiii. 20, 22; John xvii. *passim*; John x. 26; Rom. viii. 28—30, and ix. 13—24, and xi. 7; Eph. i. 4, 5; 1 Pet. 1, 2. Were I fond of disputing, as I am not, I think I could put a close reasoner hard to it, to maintain the truth of scripture-prophecies, or the belief of a particular providence, unless he would admit a divine predestination of causes and events as the ground of his arguments. However, as I said, I have chosen to waive the point; because, however true and necessary in itself, the knowledge and comprehension of it is not necessary to the being of a true christian, though I can hardly conceive he can be an established consistent believer without it. This doctrine is not the turning point between you and me; the nature of justification, and the method of a sinner's acceptance with God, are of much more immediate importance; and therefore, if I am to speak plainly, I must say, that I look upon your present sentiments, attainments, and advances, as you describe them, to constitute that kind of gain the apostle speaks of, and concerning which I hope you will one day be of his mind, and be glad to account it all loss, that you may win Christ, and be found in him, "not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 4, 7—10. For, as you tell me, you never remember a time when you were not conscious before God of great unworthiness, and intervals of earnest endeavours to serve him, though not with the same success, yet something in the same way, as at present; this is but saying, in other words, you never remember a time when old things passed away, and all things became new; and yet the apostle insists much upon this, 2 Cor. iv. 6, and v. 17. The convictions of natural conscience, and those which are wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, are different, not only in degree, but in kind; the light of a glow-worm and of the sun do not more essentially differ. The former are partial and superficial, leave us in possession of a supposed power of our own, are pacified by some appearances of an outward change, and make

us no farther sensible of the necessity of a Saviour, than to make our doings and duties (if I may so express myself) full weight, which perhaps might otherwise be a little deficient when brought to the balance of the sanctuary. But truly spiritual convictions give us far other views of sin; they lead us to a deep and awful consideration of the root, our total absolute depravity, and our utter apostacy from God by which we are as incapable of doing good, as a dead man is of performing the functions of life. They lead us to the rule and standard, the strict, holy, inflexible law of God, which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart; requires perfect, universal, persevering obedience; denounces a curse upon every failure (Gal. iii. 10), and affords neither place nor strength for repentance. Thus they sweep away every hope and refuge we had before, and fix upon us a sense of guilt and condemnation, from which there is no relief, till we can look to Jesus, as the wounded Israelites did to the brazen serpent; which was not to give efficacy to medicines, and plasters of their own application, but to heal them completely of itself by looking at it. John iii. 14, 15, and vi. 40; Isaiah xliii. 22.

You wish me to explain my distinction between faith and rational assent; and though I know no two things in the world more clearly distinct in themselves, or more expressly distinguished in scripture, yet I fear I may not easily make it appear to you. You allow faith, in your sense, to be the gift of God; but in my sense, it is likewise wrought by the operation of God, Col. ii. 12, *το υπερβαλλον μεγεθος της δυναμεως αυτου—κατα την ενεργειαν του κρατους της ισχυος αυτου*;* that same energy of the power of his strength, by which the dead body of Jesus was raised from the dead. Can these strong expressions intend no more than a rational assent, such as we give to a proposition in Euclid? I believe fallen reason is, of itself, utterly incapable even of assenting to the great truths of revelation; it may assent to the terms in which they are proposed, but it must put its own interpretation upon them, or it would despise them. The natural man can neither receive nor discern the things of God; and if any one would be wise, the apostle's first advice to him is, Let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

Indeed when the heart is changed, and the mind enlightened, than reason is sanctified, and if I may so say, baptized, renounces its curious disquisitions, and is content humbly to tread in the path of revelation. This is one difference; assent may be the act of our natural reason; faith is the effect of immediate almighty power. Another difference is, faith is always efficacious, "it worketh by love;" whereas assent is often given where it has little or no influence upon the conduct. Thus, for instance, every one will assent to this truth, All men are mortal. Yet the greatest part of mankind, though they readily assent to the proposition, and it would be highly irrational to do otherwise, live as they might do if the reverse were true. But they who have divine faith feel, as well as say, they are pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. Again, faith gives peace of conscience, access to God, and a sure evidence and subsistence of things not seen (Rom. v. 1, 2; Heb. xi. 1); whereas a calm dispassionate reasoner may be compelled to assent to the external arguments in favour of christianity, and yet remain a total stranger to that communion with God, that spirit of adoption, that foretaste of glory, which is the privilege and portion of believers. So likewise faith overcomes the world, which rational assent will not do. Witness the lives and tempers of thousands, who yet would be affronted, if their assent to the gospel should be questioned. To sum up all in a word, "He that believes shall be saved." But surely many who give a rational assent to the gospel live and die in those sins which exclude from the kingdom of God, Gal v. 19—21. Faith is the effect of a principle of new life implanted in the soul, that was before dead in trespasses and sins; and it qualifies not only for obeying the Saviour's precepts, but chiefly and primarily for receiving from and rejoicing in his fulness, admiring his love, his work, his person, his glory, his advocacy. It makes Christ precious, enthrones him in the heart, presents him as the most delightful object to our meditations; as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and strength; our root, head, life, shepherd, and husband. These are all scriptural expressions and images, setting forth, so far as words can declare, what Jesus is in himself and to his believing people. But how cold is the comment which rational assent puts upon very many passages wherein the apostle Paul endeavours, but in vain, to express the fulness of his heart upon this subject. A most valued friend of mine, a clergyman, now living, had for many years given a rational assent to the gospel. He laboured with much earnestness upon your plan, was very exemplary in his whole conduct, preached almost incessantly (two or three times every day in the week for years), having a parish in the remote parts of Yorkshire, of great extent, and containing five or six different hamlets at some distance from each other. He succeeded likewise with his people, so far as to break them off from outward irregularities; and was mentioned in a letter to the Society for propagating the Gospel, which I have seen in print, as the most perfect example of a parish-priest which this nation, or perhaps this age, has produced. Thus he went on for many years teaching his people what he knew, for he

* Ephes. i. 19.

could teach them no more. He lived in such retirement and recess, that he was unacquainted with the persons and principles of any who are now branded as enthusiasts and methodists. One day, reading Ephes. iii. in his Greek Testament, his thoughts were stopped by the word ανεξιχνιαστον, in verse 8. He was struck, and led to think with himself to this purpose:—"The apostle, when speaking of the love and riches of Christ, uses remarkable expressions; he speaks of heights, depths, and lengths, and breadths, and unsearchableness, where I seem to find every thing plain, easy, and rational. He finds mysteries where I can perceive none. Surely, though I use the words gospel, faith, and grace with him, my ideas of them must be different from his." This led him to a close examination of all his epistles, and, by the blessing of God, brought on a total change in his views and preaching. He no longer set his people to keep a law of faith, to trust in their sincerity and endeavours upon some general hope that Christ would help them out where they came short; but he preached Christ himself, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He felt himself, and laboured to convince others, that there is no hope for a sinner, but merely in the blood of Jesus, and no possibility of his doing any works acceptable to God, till he himself be first made accepted in the Beloved. Nor did he labour in vain. Now his preaching effected not only an outward reformation, but a real change of heart, in very many of his hearers. The word was received, as Paul expresses it, not with a rational assent only, but with demonstration and power in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; and their endeavours to observe the gospel precepts were abundantly more extensive, uniform, and successful, when they were brought to say, with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God."

Such a change of views and sentiments I pray God my friend may experience. These things may appear uncouth to you at present, as they have done to many, who now bless God for shewing them what their reason could never have taught them. My divinity is unfashionable enough at present, but it was not so always; you will find few books written from the era of the Reformation till a little before Laud's time, that set forth any other. There were few pulpits till after the Restoration from which any other was heard. A lamentable change has indeed since taken place; but God has not left himself without witnesses. You think, though I disclaim infallibility, I arrogate too much, in speaking with so much certainty. I am fallible, indeed; but I am sure of the main points of doctrine I hold. I am not in the least doubt, whether salvation be of faith or of works; whether faith be of our own power, or of God's operation; whether Christ's obedience or our own be the just ground of our hope; whether a man can truly call Jesus Lord, but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. I have no more hesitation about these points than I should have, were I asked, Whether it was God or man that created the heavens and the earth? Besides, as I have more than once observed, your sentiments were once my own; so that I, who have travelled both roads, may have, perhaps, some stronger reason to determine me which is the right, than you can have, who have only travelled one.

Your two sheets may lead me to write as many quires, if I do not check myself. I now come to the two queries you propose, the solution of which, you think, will clearly mark the difference of our sentiments. The substance of them is, 1st, Whether I think any sinner ever perished in his sins (to whom the gospel has been preached), because God refused to supply him with such a proportion of his assistance as was absolutely necessary to his believing and repenting, or without his having previously rejected the incitements of his Holy Spirit? A full answer to this would require a sheet. But briefly, I believe, that all mankind being corrupt and guilty before God, he might, without impeachment to his justice, have left them all to perish, as we are assured he did the fallen angels. But he was pleased to shew mercy, and mercy must be free. If the sinner has any claim to it, so far it is justice, not mercy. He who is to be our Judge assures us, that few find the gate that leadeth to life, while many throng the road to destruction. Your question seems to imply, that you think God either did make salvation equally open to all, or that it would have been more becoming his goodness to have done so.

But he is the potter, we are the clay; his ways and thoughts are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. The Judge of all the earth will do right. He has appointed a day, when he will manifest, to the conviction of all, that he has done right. Till then, I hold it best to take things upon his word, and not too harshly determine what it becomes Jehovah to do. Instead of saying what I think, let it suffice to remind you of what St. Paul thought, Rom. ix. 15—21. But farther, I say, that unless mercy were afforded to those who are saved, in a way peculiar to themselves, and which is not afforded to those who perish, I believe no one soul could be saved. For I believe fallen man, universally considered as such, is as incapable of doing the least thing towards his salvation, till prevented by the grace of God (as our Article speaks), as a dead body is of restoring itself to life. Whatever difference takes place

between men in this respect is of grace, that is, of God, undeserved. Yea, his first approaches to our hearts are undesired too; for, till he seeks us, we cannot, we will not, seek him, Psalm cx. 3. It is in the day of his power, and not before, his people are made willing. But I believe, where the gospel is preached, they who do perish, do wilfully resist the light, and chuse and cleave to darkness, and stifle the convictions which the truths of God, when his true gospel is indeed preached, will, in one degree or other, force upon their minds. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the love of other things, the violence of sinful appetites, their prejudices, pride, and self-righteousness, either prevent the reception, or choke the growth, of the good seed: thus their own sin and obstinacy is the proper cause of their destruction: they will not come to Christ, that they may have life. At the same time, it is true that they cannot, unless they are supernaturally drawn of God, John v. 40, vi. 44. They will not, and they cannot come. Both are equally true, and they are consistent. For a man's *cannot* is not a natural, but a moral inability: not an impossibility in the nature of things, as it is for me to walk upon the water, or to fly in the air; but such an inability as, instead of extenuating, does exceedingly enhance and aggravate his guilt. He is so blinded by Satan, so alienated from God by nature and wicked works, so given up to sin, so averse from that way of salvation, which is contrary to his pride and natural wisdom, that he will not embrace it, or seek after it; and therefore he cannot, till the grace of God powerfully enlightens his mind, and overcomes his obstacles. But this brings me to your second query:

2. Do I think that God, in the ordinary course of his providence, grants this assistance in an irresistible manner, or effects faith and conversion without the sinner's own hearty consent and concurrence? I rather chose to term grace invincible than irresistible: for it is too often resisted even by those who believe; but because it is invincible, it triumphs over all resistance when He is pleased to bestow it. For the rest, I believe no sinner is converted without his own hearty will and concurrence. But he is not willing till he is made so. Why does he at all refuse? Because he is insensible of his state; because he knows not the evil of sin, the strictness of the law, the majesty of God whom he has offended, nor the total apostacy of his heart; because he is blind to eternity, and ignorant of the excellency of Christ; because he is comparatively whole, and sees not his need of this great physician; because he relies upon his own wisdom, power, and supposed righteousness. Now, in this state of things, when God comes with a purpose of mercy, he begins by convincing the person of sin, judgment, and righteousness, causes him to feel and know that he is a lost, condemned, helpless creature, and then discovers to him the necessity, sufficiency, and willingness, of Christ to save them that are ready to perish, without money or price, without doings or deservings. Then he sees faith to be very different from a rational assent, finds that nothing but the power of God can produce a well grounded hope in the heart of a convinced sinner; therefore looks to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of faith, to enable him to believe. For this he waits in what we call the means of grace; he prays, he reads the word, he thirsts for God, as the hart pants for the water brooks; and though, perhaps, for a while he is distressed with many doubts and fears, he is encouraged to wait on, because Jesus has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The obstinacy of the will remains while the understanding is dark, and ceases when that is enlightened. Suppose a man walking in the dark, where there are pits and precipices of which he is not aware. You are sensible of his danger, and call after him: but he thinks he knows better than you, refuses your advice, and is perhaps angry with you for your importunity. He sees no danger, therefore, will not be persuaded there is any; but if you go with a light, get before him, and show him plainly, that if he takes another step he falls beyond the power of recovery; then he will stop of his own accord, blame himself for not minding you before, and be ready to comply with your farther directions. In either case man's will acts with equal freedom; the difference of his conduct arises from conviction. Something like this is the case of our spiritual concerns. Sinners are called and warned by the word; but they are wise in their own eyes, and take but little notice till the Lord gives them light, which he is not bound to give to any, and therefore cannot be bound to give to all. They who have it have reason to be thankful, and subscribe to the apostle's words, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

I have not yet half done with the first sheet: I shall consider the rest at leisure, but send this as a specimen of my willingness to clear my sentiments to you as far as I can. Unless it should please God to make what I offer satisfactory, I well know beforehand what objections and answers will occur to you, for these points have been often debated; and, after a course of twenty-seven years, in which religion has been the chief object of my thoughts and inquiries, I am not entirely a stranger to what can be offered on either side. What I write, I write simply and in love, beseeching him who alone can set a seal to his own truth to guide you and bless you. This letter has been more than a week in hand: I have been called from it, I suppose,

ten times, frequently in the middle of a period or a line. My leisure, which before was small, is now reduced almost to a nothing. But I am desirous to keep up my correspondence with you, because I feel an affectionate interest in you, and because it pleased God to put it into your heart to apply to me. You cannot think how your first letter struck me: it was so unexpected, and seemed so improbable that you should open your mind to me, I immediately conceived a hope it would prove for good. Nor am I yet discouraged.

When you have leisure and inclination, write; I shall always be glad to hear from you, and I will proceed in answering what I have already by me as fast as I can. But I have many letters now waiting for answers, which must be attended to.

I recommend you to the blessing and care of the great Shepherd, and remain, &c.

LETTER VIII.

December 8, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ARE you willing I should still call you so, or are you quite weary of me? Your silence makes me suspect the latter. However, it is my part to fulfil my promise, and then leave the event to God. As I have but an imperfect remembrance of what I have already written, I may be liable to some repetitions. I cannot stay to comment upon every line in your letter, but I proceed to notice such passages as seem most to affect the subject in debate. When you speak of the scriptures maintaining one consistent sense, which, if the word of God, it certainly must do, you say you read and understand it in this one consistent sense; nay, you cannot remember the time when you did not. It is otherwise with me and with multitudes; we remember when it was a sealed book, and we are sure it would have been so still, had not the Holy Spirit opened our understandings. But when you add, though I pretend not to understand the whole, yet what I do understand appears perfectly consistent, I know not how far this exception may extend, for perhaps the reason why you allow you do not understand some parts, is because you cannot make them consistent with the sense you put upon other parts. You quote my words, "That when we are conscious of our depravity, reasoning stands us in no stead." Undoubtedly reason always will stand rational creatures in some stead; but my meaning is, that when we are deeply convinced of sin, all our former reasonings upon the ways of God, while we made our conceptions the standard by which we judge what is befitting him to do, as if he were altogether such an one as ourselves,—all those cobweb reasonings are swept away, and we submit to his αυτος εφη without reasoning, though not without reason. For we have the strongest reason imaginable to acknowledge ourselves vile and lost without righteousness and strength, when we actually feel ourselves to be so. You speak of the gospel terms of justification. This term is *faith*. Mark xvi. 16, Acts xiii. 39. The gospel propounds, admits no other term. But this faith, as I endeavoured to show in my former letter, is very different from rational assent. You speak likewise of the law of faith, by which, if you mean what some call the remedial law, which we are to obey as well as we can, and such obedience, together with our faith, will entitle us to acceptance with God, I am persuaded the scriptures speak of no such thing. Grace and works of any kind, in the point of acceptance with God, are mentioned by the apostle not only as opposites or contraries, but as absolutely contradictory to each other, like fire and water, light and darkness; so that the affirmation of one is the denial of the other. Rom. iv. 5. and xi. 6. God justifies freely, justifies the ungodly, and him that worketh not. Though justifying faith be indeed an active principle, it worketh by love, yet not for acceptance. Those whom the apostle exhorts "to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," he considers as justified already; for he considers them as believers, in whom he supposed God had already begun a good work; and if so, was confident he would accomplish it, Phil. i. 6. To them, the consideration that God, who dwells in the heart of believers, wrought in them to will and to do, was a powerful motive and encouragement to them to work, that is, to give all diligence in his appointed means, as a right sense of the sin that dwelleth in us, and the snares and temptations around us, will teach us still to work with fear and trembling. You suppose a difference between christians (so called) who are devoted to God in baptism, and those who in the first ages were converted from abominable superstitions and idolatrous vices. It is true in christian countries we do not worship heathen divinities *eo nomine*; and this is the principal difference I can find. Neither reason nor observation will allow me to think, that human nature is a whit better now than it was in the apostles time. I know no kinds or degrees of wickedness which prevailed among heathens which are not prevalent among nominal christians, who have perhaps been baptized in their infancy; and therefore, as the streams in the life are equally worldly, sensual, devilish, I doubt not but the fountain of the heart is equally polluted and poisonous; and that is as true, as in the days of Christ and his apostles, that unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. You sent me a sermon upon the new birth, or regeneration

and you have several of mine on the same subject. I wish you to compare them with each other, and with scripture; and I pray God to shew you wherein the difference consists, and on which side the truth lies.

When you desire me to reconcile God's being the author of sin with his justice, you shew that you misunderstand the whole strain of my sentiments; for I am persuaded you would not misrepresent them. It is easy to charge harsh consequences, which I neither allow, nor indeed do they follow from my sentiments. God cannot be the author of sin in that sense you would fix upon me; but is it possible that upon your plan you find no difficulty in what the scriptures teach us upon this subject? I conceive that those who were concerned in the death of Christ were very great sinners, and that in nailing him to the cross they committed atrocious wickedness; yet, if the apostle may be believed, all this was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Acts ii. 23; and they did no more than what his hand and purpose had determined should be done, chap. iv. 28. And you will observe that this wicked act (wicked with respect to the perpetrators) was not only permitted, but fore-ordained in the strongest and most absolute sense of the word. The glory of God and the salvation of men depended upon its being done, and just in that manner, and with all those circumstances which actually took place, and yet Judas and the rest acted freely, and their wickedness was properly their own. Now, my friend, the arguments which satisfy you that the scriptures do not represent God as the author of this sin in this appointment. will plead for me at the same time; and when you think you easily overcome me by asking, "Can God be the author of sin?" your imputation falls as directly upon the word of God himself. God is no more the author of sin than the sun is the cause of ice; but it is in the nature of water to congeal into ice when the sun's influence is suspended to a certain degree. So there is sin enough in the hearts of men to make the earth the very image of hell, and to prove that men are no better than incarnate devils, were he to suspend his influence and restraint. Sometimes, and in some instances, he is pleased to suspend it considerably; and, so far as he does, human nature quickly appears in its true colours. Objections of this kind have been repeated and refuted before either you or I were born; and the apostle evidently supposes they would be urged against his doctrine, when he obviates the question, "Why doth he yet find fault; who hath resisted his will?" to which he gives no other answer than by referring it to God's sovereignty, and the power which a potter has over the clay. I think I have in a former letter made some reply to the charge of positiveness in my own opinion. I acknowledge that I am fallible, yet I must again lay claim to a certainty about the way of salvation. I am as sure of some things as of my own existence: I should be so if there was no human creature upon earth but myself. However, my sentiments are confirmed by the suffrages of thousands who have lived before me, of many with whom I have personally conversed in different places and circumstances, unknown to each other; yet all have received the same views, because taught by the same Spirit. And I have likewise been greatly confirmed by the testimony of many with whom I have conversed in their dying hours. I have seen them rejoicing in the prospect of death, free from fears, breathing the air of immortality; heartily disclaiming their duties and performances; acknowledging that their best actions were attended with evil sufficient to condemn them; renouncing every shadow of hope, but what they derived from the blood of Christ, as the sole cause of their acceptance; yet triumphing in him over every enemy and fear, and as sure of heaven as if they were already there. And such were the apostle's hopes, wholly founded on knowing whom he had believed, and his persuasion of his ability to keep that which he had committed unto him. This is faith, a renouncing of every thing we are apt to call our own, and relying wholly upon the blood, righteousness, and intercession of Jesus. However, I cannot communicate this my certainty to you; I only tell you there is such a thing, in hopes, if you do not think I wilfully lie both to God and man, you will be earnest to seek it from him who bestowed it on me, and who will bestow it upon all who will sincerely apply to him, and patiently wait upon him for it.

I cannot but wonder, that while you profess to believe the depravity of human nature, you should speak of good qualities inherent in it. The word of God, describes it as evil, only evil, and that continually. That there are such qualities as Stoics and infidels call virtue, I allow. God has not left man destitute of such dispositions as are necessary to the peace of society; but I deny there is any moral goodness in them, unless they are founded in a supreme love to God, have his glory for their aim, and are produced by faith in Jesus Christ. A man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, in zeal for the truth, and yet be a mere nothing, a tinkling cymbal, in the sight of him who seeth not as man seeth, but judgeth the heart. Many infidels and avowed enemies to the grace and gospel of Christ, have made a fair shew of what the world call virtue; but christian virtue is grace, the effect of a new nature and new life; and works thus wrought in God are as different from the faint, partial imitations of them which fallen nature is capable of producing, as a living

man is from a statue. A statue may express the features and lineaments of the person whom it represents, but there is no life.

Your comment on the seventh to the Romans, latter part, contradicts my feelings. You are either of a different make and nature from me, or else you are not rightly apprised of your own state, if you do not find the apostle's complaint very suitable to yourself. I believe it applicable to the most holy christian upon earth. But controversies of this kind are worn thread-bare. When you speak of the spiritual part of a natural man, it sounds to me like the living part of a dead man, or the seeing part of a blind man. Paul tells me, that the natural man, whatever his spiritual part may be, can neither receive nor discern the things of God. What the apostle speaks of himself (Rom. vii.) is no more, when rightly understood, than what he affirms of all who are partakers of a spiritual life, or who are true believers, Gal. v. 17. The carnal natural mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. When you subjoin, "Till it be set at liberty from the law of sin," you do not comment upon the text, but make an addition of your own, which the text will by no means bear. The carnal mind is enmity. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity itself is incurable. This carnal mind, natural man, old man, flesh (for the expressions are all equivalent, and denote and include the heart of man as he is by nature), may be crucified, must be mortified, but cannot be sanctified. All that is good or gracious, is the effect of a new creation, a supernatural principle, wrought in the heart by the gospel of Christ, and the agency of his Spirit; and, till that is effected, the ὑψηλὸν, the highest attainment, the finest qualifications in man, however they may exalt him in his own eyes, or recommend him to the notice of his fellow-worms, are but abomination in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. The gospel is calculated and designed to stain the pride of human glory. It is provided, not for the wise and the righteous, for those who think they have good dispositions and good works to plead, but for the guilty, the helpless, the wretched, for those who are ready to perish; it fills the hungry with good things, but it sends the rich empty away. See Rev. iii. 17, 18.

You ask, If man can do nothing without an extraordinary impulse from on high, is he to sit still and careless? By no means—I am far from saying man can do nothing, though I believe he cannot open his own eyes, or give himself faith. I wish every man to abstain carefully from sinful company, and sinful actions, to read the Bible, to pray to God for his heavenly teaching. For this waiting upon God he has a moral ability; and if he persevere thus in seeking, the promise is sure, that he shall not seek in vain. But I would not have him mistake the means for the end; think himself good because he is preserved from gross vices and follies, or trust to his religious course of duties for acceptance, nor be satisfied till Christ be revealed in him, formed within him, dwell in his heart by faith, and till he can say upon good grounds, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I need not tell you, these are scriptural expressions; I am persuaded, if they were not, they would be exploded by many as unintelligible jargon. True faith, my dear Sir, unites the soul to Christ, and thereby gives access to God, and fills it with a peace passing understanding, a hope, a joy unspeakable and full of glory; teaches us that we are weak in ourselves but enables us to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. To those who thus believe, Christ is precious, their beloved; they hear and know his voice: the very sound of his name gladdens their hearts, and he manifests himself to them as he does not to the world. Thus the scriptures speak, thus the first christians experienced; and this is precisely the language, which, in our days, is despised as enthusiasm and folly. For it is now as it was then, though these things are revealed to babes, and they are as sure of them as they that see the noon-day sun, they are hidden from the wise and prudent, till the Lord makes them willing to renounce their own wisdom, and to become fools, that they may be truly wise, 1 Cor. i. 18, 19.; iii. 8.; viii. 2. Attention to the education of children is an undoubted duty; and it is a mercy when it so far succeeds as to preserve them from gross wickedness; but it will not change the heart. They who receive Christ are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, John i. 13.

If a man professes to love the Lord Jesus, I am willing to believe him, if he does not give me proof to the contrary; but I am sure, at the same time, no one can love him in the scriptural sense, who does not know the need and the worth of a Saviour; in other words, who is not brought, as a ruined, helpless sinner, to live upon him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They who love him thus will speak highly of him, and acknowledge that he is their all in all. And they who thus love him, and speak of him, will get little thanks for their pains in such a world as this: "All that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution;" the world, that hated him, will hate them. And though it is possible, by his grace to put to silence, in some measure, the ignorance of foolish men; and though his providence can protect his people, so that not a hair of their heads can be hurt without his permission: yet the world will shew their teeth, if they are not

suffered to bite. The apostles were accounted babblers, ὡς περικαθάρματα του κοσμου και πάντων περίψημα. I need not point out to you the force of these expressions. We are no better than the apostles; nor have we reason to expect much better treatment, so far as we walk in their steps. On the other hand, there is a sober, decent way of speaking of God, and goodness, and benevolence, and sobriety, which the world will bear well enough; nay, we may say a little about Jesus Christ, as ready to make up the deficiencies of our honest and good endeavours, and this will not displease them. But if we preach him as the only foundation, lay open the horrid evils of the human heart, tell our hearers that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and have no better ground of hope in themselves than the vilest malefactors, in order to exalt the glory of Jesus, as saving those who are saved wholly and freely for his own name's sake; if we tell the virtuous and decent, as well as the profligate, that unless they are born again, and made partakers of living faith, and count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, they cannot be saved: this the world cannot bear. We shall be called knaves or fools, uncharitable bigots, and twenty hard names. If you have met with nothing like this, I wish it may lead you to suspect whether you have yet received the right key to the doctrines of Christ: for depend upon it, the offence of the cross is not ceased.

I am grieved and surprised that you seem to take little notice of any thing in the account of my deceased friend, but his wishing himself to be a deist, and his having play-books about him in his illness. As to the plays, they were Shakespeare's, which, as a man of taste, it is no great wonder he should sometimes look in. Your remark on the other point shews that you are not much acquainted with the exercises of the human mind under certain circumstances. I believe I observed formerly, that it was not a libertine wish. Had you known him, you would have known one of the most amiable and unblemished characters. Few were more beloved and admired for an uniform course of integrity, moderation, and benevolence; but he was discouraged. He studied the Bible, believed it in general to be the word of God; but his wisdom, his strong turn for reasoning, stood in his way, that he could get no solid comfort from it. He felt the vanity of the schemes opposed by many men admired in the world as teachers of divinity; and he felt the vanity likewise of his own. He was also a minister, and had a sincere design of doing good. He wished to reform the profligate, and comfort the afflicted by his preaching; but as he was not acquainted with that one kind of preaching which God owns to the edification of the hearers, he found he could do neither. A sense of disappointments of this kind distressed him. Finding in himself none of that peace which the scriptures speak of, and none of the influence he hoped for attending his ministry, he was led sometimes to question the truth of the scriptures. We have a spiritual enemy always near, to press upon a mind in this desponding situation: nor am I surprised that he should then wish himself a deist; since, if there were any hope for a sinner but by faith in the blood of Jesus, he had as much of his own goodness to depend upon as most I have known. As for the rest, if you could see nothing admirable and wonderful in the clearness, the dignity, the spirituality of his expressions, after the Lord revealed the gospel to him, I can only say, I am sorry for it. This I know, that some persons of sense, taste, learning, and reason, and far enough from my sentiments, have been greatly struck with them. You say, a death-bed repentance is what you would be sorry to give any hope of. My dear friend, it is well for poor sinners that God's thoughts and ways are as much above men's, as the heavens are higher than the earth. We agreed to communicate our sentiments freely, and promised not to be offended with each other's freedom, if we could help it. I am afraid of offending you by a thought just now upon my mind, and yet I dare not in conscience suppress it: I must therefore venture to say, that I hope they who depend upon such a repentance as your scheme points out, will repent of their repentance itself upon their death-bed at least, if not sooner. You and I, perhaps, should have encouraged the fair-spoken young man, who said he had kept all the commandments from his youth, and rather have left the thief upon the cross to perish like a villain, as he lived. But Jesus thought differently. I do not encourage sinners to defer their repentance to their death-beds. I press the necessity of a repentance this moment. But then I take care to tell them, that repentance is the gift of God; that Jesus is exalted to bestow it; and that all their endeavours that way, unless they seek to him for grace, will be vain as washing a blackmoor, and transient as washing a sow which will soon return to the mire again. I know the evil heart will abuse the grace of God; the apostle knew this likewise, Rom. iii. 8, and vi. 3. But this did not tempt him to suppress the glorious grace of the gospel, the power of Jesus to save to the uttermost, and his merciful promise, that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast him out. The repentance of a natural heart, proceeding wholly from fear, like that of some malefactors, who are sorry, not that they have committed robbery or murder, but that they must be hanged for it; this undoubtedly is nothing worth, whether in time of health, or in a dying hour. But that μετανοια, that gracious change of heart, views, and disposi-

tions, which always takes place when Jesus is made known to the soul as having died, that the sinner might live, and been wounded, that he might be healed; this, at whatever period God is pleased to afford and effect it by his Spirit, brings a sure and everlasting salvation with it.

Still I find I have not done: you ask my exposition of the parables of the talents and pounds; but at present I can write no more. I have only just time to tell you, that when I begged your acceptance of Omicron, nothing was farther from my expectation than a correspondence with you. The frank and kind manner in which you wrote presently won upon my heart. In the course of our letters upon Subscription, I observed an integrity and disinterestedness in you, which endeared you to me still more. Since that, our debates have taken a much more interesting turn; I have considered it as a call, and an opportunity put in my hand, by the special providence of him who ruleth over all. I have embraced the occasion, to lay before you simply, and rather in a way of testimony than argumentation, what, in the main, I am sure is truth. I have done enough to discharge my conscience, but shall never think I do enough to answer the affection I bear you. I have done enough likewise to make you weary of my correspondence, unless it should please God to fix the subject deeply upon your mind, and make you attentive to the possibility and vast importance of a mistake in matters of everlasting concernment. I pray that the good Spirit of God may guide you into all truths. He only is the effectual teacher. I still retain a cheerful hope, that some things you cannot at present receive, will hereafter be the joy and comfort of your heart: but I know it cannot be till the Lord's own time. I cannot promise to give such long answers as your letters require, to clear up every text that may be proposed, and to answer every objection that may be started; yet I shall be glad to change a letter now and then. At present, it remains with you whether our correspondence continues or not, as this is the third letter I have written since I heard from you, and therefore must be the last till I do. I should think what remains might be better settled *viva voce*; for which purpose I shall be glad to see you, or ready to wait on you when leisure will permit, and when I know it will be agreeable: but if (as life and all its affairs are precarious) we should never meet in this world, I pray God we may meet at the right hand of Jesus, in the great day when he shall come to gather up his jewels, and to judge the world. There is an endless diversity of opinions in matters of religion; which of them are right and safe, and will lead to eternal glory, *dies iste indicabit*. I am still in a manner lost amidst more engagements than I have time to comply with; but I feel and know that I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MR. B———, &c.

LETTER I.

September 28, 1774.

MY DEAREST SIR,

I SEE the necessity of having, if possible, my principles at my fingers ends, that I may apply them as occasions arise every hour. Certainly if my ability was equal to my inclination, I would remove your tumour with a word or a touch; I would exempt you instantly and constantly from every inconvenience and pain: but you are in the hands of one who could do all this and more, and who loves you infinitely better than I can do, and yet he is pleased to permit you to suffer. What is the plain inference? Certainly, that at the present juncture, he to whom all the concatenations and consequences of events are present in one view, sees it better for you to have this tumour than to be without it; for I have no more idea of a tumour rising, or any other incidental trial befalling you, without a cause, without a need-be, without a designed advantage to result from it, than I have of a mountain or pyramid rising up of its own accord in the middle of Salisbury Plain. The promise is express, and literally true, that all things, universally and without exception, shall work together for good to them that love God. But they work together; the smallest as well as the greatest events have their place and use,—like the several stones in the arch of a bridge, where no one would singly be ---ful, but every one in its place is necessary the structure and support of the arch; or her like the movement of a watch, where ough there is an evident subordination of arts and some pieces have a greater comparative importance than others, yet the smallest ieces have their place and use, and are so far qually important, that the whole design of be machine would be obstructed for want of em. Some dispensations and turns of divine providence may be compared to the main spring or capital wheels which have a more visible, sensible, and determining influence upon the whole tenor of our lives: but the more ordinary occurrences of every day are at least pins and pivots, adjusted, timed, and suited with equal accuracy, by the hand of the same great Artist who planned and executes the whole; and we are sometimes surprised to see how much more depends and turns upon them than we were aware of. Then we admire his skill, and say he has done all things well. Indeed, with respect to his works of providence, as well as of creation, he well deserves the title of *Maximus in minimis*. Such thoughts as these, when I am enabled to realize them, in some measure reconcile me to what he allots for myself or my friends, and convince me of the propriety of that expostulation, which speaks the language of love as well as of authority, "Be still, and know that I am God." I sympathize with you in your trial, and pray and trust that your Shepherd will be your Physician; will superintend and bless the use of means; will give you in his good time health and cure, and at all times reveal unto you abundance of peace. His promises and power are necessary for our preservation in the smoother scenes he has allotted for us, and they are likewise sufficient for the roughest. We are always equally in danger in ourselves, and always equally safe under the shadow of his wings. No storms, assaults, sieges, or pestilences can hurt us, till we have filled up his appointed measure of service; and when our work is done, and he has ripened us for glory, it is no great matter by what means he is pleased to call us home to himself.

I have only room to present our joint and sincerest respects. The Lord bless you all.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

October 15, 1774.

MY DEAREST SIR,

I think the greatness of trials is to be estimated, rather by the impression they make upon our spirits, than by their outward appearance. The smallest will be too heavy for us if we are left to grapple with it in our own strength, or rather, weakness; and if the Lord is pleased to put forth his power in us, he can make the heaviest light. A lively impression of his love, or of his sufferings for us, or of the glories within the vail, accompanied with a due sense of the misery from which we are redeemed; these thoughts will enable us to be not only submissive, but even joyful in tribulations. When faith is in exercise, though the flesh will have its feelings, the spirit will triumph over them. But it is needful we should know that we have no sufficiency in ourselves, and in order to know it, we must feel it; and therefore, the Lord sometimes withdraws his sensible influence, and then the buzzing of a fly will be an overmatch for our patience; at other times, he will shew us what he can do in us and for us; then we can adopt the apostle's words, and say, I can do and suffer all things through Christ strengthening me. He has said, My grace is sufficient for thee. It is observable, that the children of God seldom disappoint our expectations under great trials; if they show a wrongness of spirit, it is usually in such little incidents, that we are ready to wonder at them: for which, two reasons may be principally assigned. When great trials are in view, we run simply and immediately to our all-sufficient friend, feel our dependence, and cry in good earnest for help; but if the occasion seems small, we are too apt secretly to lean to our own wisdom and strength, as if in such slight matters we could make shift without him. Therefore, in these we often fail. Again, the Lord deals with us as we sometimes see mothers with their children. When a child begins to walk, he is often very self-important; he thinks he needs no help, and can hardly bear to be supported by the finger of another. Now, in such a case, if there is no danger of harm from a fall, as if he is on a plain carpet, the mother will let him alone to try how he can walk. He is pleased at first, but presently down he comes; and a few experiments of this kind convince him he is not so strong and able as he thought, and make him willing to be led. But was he upon the brink of a river or a precipice, from whence a fall might be fatal, the tender mother would not trust him to himself, no not for a moment. I have not room to make the application, nor is it needful. It requires the same grace to bear with a right spirit a cross word, as a cross injury; or the breaking of a china-plate, as the death of an only son.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

November 23, 1774.

MY DEAR SIR,

I hope to be informed in due time, that the Lord has given you full health and cure. He has preserved me hitherto from the hands of surgeons; but I feel as if my flesh would prove, as you say, a very coward, were it needful to submit to a painful operation. Yet I observe, when such operations are necessary, if people are satisfied of a surgeon's skill and prudence, they will not only yield to be cut at his pleasure, without pretending to direct him where, or how long he shall make the incision, but will thank and pay him for putting them to pain, because they believe it for their advantage. I wish I could be more like them in my concerns. My body, as I said, is, through mercy, free from considerable ailments, but I have a soul that requires surgeon's work continually; there is some tumor to be discussed or laid open, some dislocation to be reduced, some fracture to be healed, almost daily. It is my great mercy, that one who is infallible in skill, who exercises incessant care, and boundless compassion towards all his patients, has undertaken my case; and complicated as it is, I dare not doubt his making a perfect cure. Yet, alas! I too often discover such impatience, distrust, and complaining, when under his hand, am so apt to find fault with the instruments he is pleased to make use of, so ready to think the salutary wounds he makes, unnecessary or too large; in a word, I shew such a promptness to controul, were I able, or to direct his operations, that, were not his patience beyond expression, he would before now have given me up. I am persuaded, no money would induce Mr. —— to attend upon a patient who should act towards him as I have done towards my best Physician. Sometimes I indulge a hope that I am growing wiser, and think surely, after such innumerable proofs as I have had, that he does all things well, I shall now be satisfied to leave myself quietly and without reserve to his disposal. A thousand such surrenders I have made, and a thousand times I have interpretatively retracted them. Yet still he is gracious. O, how shall I praise him at last!

I thank you for your letter; I never receive one from you without pleasure, and, I believe, seldom without profit, at least for the time. I believe, with you, that there is much of the proper and defined efficacy of the gospel-mystery which I have not yet experienced. And I suppose they who are advanced far

beyond me in the divine life, judge the same of their utmost present attainments. Yet I have no idea of any permanent state in this life, that shall make my experience cease to be a state of warfare and humiliation. At my first setting out, indeed, I thought to be better, and to feel myself better from year to year; I expected by degrees to attain every thing which I then comprised in my idea of a saint. I thought my grain of grace, by much diligence and careful improvement, would in time amount to a pound, that pound in a farther space of time to a talent, and then I hoped to increase from one talent to many; so that supposing the Lord should spare me a competent number of years, I pleased myself with the thoughts of dying rich. But, alas! these my golden expectations have been like South Sea dreams; I have lived hitherto a poor sinner, and I believe I shall die one. Have I then gained nothing by waiting upon the Lord? Yes, I have gained that, which I once would rather have been without, such accumulated proofs of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my heart, as I hope, by the Lord's blessing, has in some measure taught me to know what I mean, when I say, Behold, I am vile! And in connection with this, I have gained such experience of the wisdom, power, and compassion of my Redeemer, the need, the worth of his blood, righteousness, attention, and intercession—the glory that he displays in pardoning iniquity and sin, and passing by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, that my soul cannot but cry out, Who is a God like unto thee! Thus, if I have any meaner thoughts of myself (Ezek. xvi. 63), and any higher thoughts of him than I had twenty years ago, I have reason to be thankful; every grain of this experience is worth mountains of gold. And if, by his mercy, I shall yet sink more in my own esteem, and he will he pleased to rise still more glorious to my eyes, and more precious to my heart; I expect it will be much in the same way. I was ashamed when I began to seek him, I am more ashamed now; and I expect to be most of all ashamed when he shall appear to destroy my last enemy. But, O! I may rejoice in him, to think that he will not be ashamed of me.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

May 19, 1775.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HOPE you will find the Lord present at all times, and in all places. When it is so, we are at home everywhere; when it is otherwise, home is a prison, and abroad a wilderness. I know what I ought to desire, and what I do desire. I point him out to others as the all in all; I esteem him as such in my own judgment; but, alas! my experience abounds with complaints. He is my sun; but clouds, and sometimes walls, intercept him from my view. He is my strength; yet I am prone to lean upon reeds. He is my friend; but on my part there is such coldness and ingratitude as no other friend could bear. But still he is gracious, and shames me with his repeated multiplied goodness. O for a warmer heart, a more simple dependence, a more active zeal, a more sensible deliverance from the effects of this body of sin and death! He helps me in my endeavours to keep the vineyards of others; but, alas! my own does not seem to flourish as some do around me. However, though I cannot say I labour more abundantly than they all, I have reason to say with thankfulness, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." My poor story would soon be much worse, did not he support, restrain, and watch over me every minute. Let me intreat your praises and prayers on the behalf of me and mine, and may the Lord bless you and yours with an increase in every good.

I am, &c.

LETTER V

September 2, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE young woman I spoke of is still living, and not much weaker than when I left her. The Lord was pleased to relieve her on Tuesday evening, and she was comfortable the remainder of the week. But yesterday her conflicts returned, and she was in great distress The enemy who always fights against the peace of the Lord's children, finds great advantage against them when their spirits are weakened and worn down by long illness, and is often permitted to assault them. The reasons are hidden from us, but they are doubtless worthy of his wisdom and love, and they terminate in victory, to the praise of his glorious grace, which is more signally manifested by his leading them safely through fire and water, than if their path was always smooth. He is sovereign in his dispensations, and appoints some of his people to trials and exercises to which others, perhaps, are strangers all their days. Believers are soldiers: all soldiers, by their profession, are engaged to fight, if called upon, but who shall be called to sustain the hottest service, and be most frequently exposed upon the field of battle, depends upon the will of the general or king. Some of our soldiers are now upon hard service in America, while others are stationed round the palace, see the King's face daily, and have no dangers or hardships to encounter. These, however, are as liable to a call as the others; but, if not called upon, they may enjoy with

thankfulness the more easy post assigned them. Thus, the Captain of our salvation allots to his soldiers such stations as he thinks proper. He has a right to employ whom he will, and where he will. Some are comparatively at ease; they are not exposed to the fiercest onsets, but live near his presence: others are, to appearance, pressed above measure, beyond strength, so that they despair even of life; yet they are supported, and in the end made more than conquerors, through him that hath loved them. Long observation convinces me, that the temptations which some endure are not chastisements brought upon them by unfaithfulness, or for anything remarkably wrong in their spirit or walk; I often rather consider that in this warfare, as in worldly wars, the post of danger and difficulty is the post of honour, and as such assigned to those whom he has favoured with a peculiar measure of his grace. This young woman, in particular, was always from her first awakening remarkably humble and spiritual, and possessed of a broken and contrite spirit. I never saw her in a wrong spirit, or heard her speak an unadvised word; yet I believe it is impossible to express the agonies she has endured. The effect of them is visible. Her animal frame was unable to sustain the burden. I believe they were the immediate cause of that illness which is now bringing her down to the grave. I doubt not but these cases depend in a great measure upon constitution; but then the temperament of our bodies depends upon his pleasure, for, if the very hairs of our head are numbered, it is impossible that those circumstances of our frame which, by the near connection between body and soul, have a powerful influence upon the state of our minds, can escape his notice. He could cure such bodily disorders as affect the peace of his people in a moment, yet he does not, though he loves them. There must be therefore wise reasons why he does not; and, though we know them not now, we shall know them hereafter. Possibly some suffer for the instruction of the rest, that we may learn to be more thankful to him for the peace we enjoy, and to be more humbly dependent upon him for the continuance of it. The Lord's way is in the deep, and his path in the great waters, untraceable by our feeble reasonings, but faith brings in a good report. We need not doubt but he does all things well, and in due time we shall see it. In the meanwhile he checks our vain inquiries, and calls upon us to be still, and know that he is God.

I brought home with me a thankful sense of the kindness and friendship I am favoured with from you and all yours. I account this connection one of the great comforts of my life, and I hope it has been, and will be, not only pleasant but profitable to me. Though I am but an unapt scholar, I hope I am not unwilling to learn, and the Lord, in his merciful providence, appoints me many teachers. There is little praise due to us, if we either communicate or receive benefit in our intercourse with our fellow-disciples. In both we are but instruments under the influence of a higher hand. Were christians to meet together without their Lord, they would either trifle or quarrel their time away. But as he has said, where two or three are met, there am I in the midst of them, we may well be glad of opportunities of coming together. And though, for my own part, I am so poor an improver of such seasons, that the recollection of them, when past, is generally accompanied with shame and regret, yet he is gracious and merciful, and seldom leaves me to complain that they were wholly in vain.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

July 22, 1777

MY DEAR SIR,

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THE complaints you make of what passes within, encourage me under what I feel myself. Indeed, if those whom I have reason to believe are more spiritual and humble than I am, did not give some testimony that they find their hearts made of the same materials as mine is, I should be sometimes hard put to it to believe that I have any part or lot in the matter, or any real knowledge of the life of faith. But this concurrent testimony of many witnesses confirms me in what I think the scriptures plainly teach, that the soil of human nature, though many spots are certainly better weeded, planted, and manured than others, is everywhere the same, universally bad; so bad that it cannot be worse, and of itself is only capable of producing noxious weeds and nourishing venomous creatures. We often see the effects of culture, skill, and expense will make a garden where all was desert before. When Jesus, the good husbandman, incloses a soil, and separates it from the waste of the world, to make it a residence for himself, a change presently takes place; it is planted and watered from above, and visited with beams infinitely more cheering and fertilizing than those of the material sun. But its natural propensity to bring forth weeds still continues, and one half of his dispensations may be compared to a company of weeders, whom he sends forth into his garden to pluck up all which he has not planted with his own hand, and which, if left to grow, would quickly overpower and overtop the rest. But, alas! the ground is so impregnated with evil seeds, and they shoot in such quick succession, that, if this weeding work were not constantly repeated, all former labour would

be lost. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* hence arises the necessity of daily crosses and disappointments, daily changes of frame, and such multiplied convictions that we are nothing and can do nothing of ourselves; all are needful, and barely sufficient to prevent our hearts from being over-run with pride, self-dependance, and security. Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

November 6, 1777.

MY DEAR SIR,

You say you are more disposed to cry *miserere* than *hallelujah*. Why not both together? When the treble is praise, and heart-humiliation for the bass, the melody is pleasant, and the harmony good. However, if not both together, we must have them alternately; not all singing, not all sighing, but an interchange and balance, that we may be neither lifted too high, nor cast down too low, which would be the case if we were very comfortable or very sorrowful for a long continuance. But though we change, the Saviour changes not. All our concerns are in his hands, and therefore safe. His path is in the deep waters, his thoughts and methods of conduct are as high above ours as the heavens are high above the earth; and he often takes a course for accomplishing his purposes directly contrary to what our narrow views would prescribe. He wounds in order to heal, kills that he may make alive, casts down when he designs to raise, brings a death upon our feelings, wishes, and prospects, when he is about to give us the desire of our hearts. These things he does to prove us; but he himself knows, and has determined beforehand, what he will do. The proof indeed usually turns out to our shame. Impatience and unbelief shew their heads, and prompt us to suppose this and the other thing, yea perhaps all things are against us, to question whether he be with us and for us, or not. But it issues likewise in the praise of his goodness, when we find that, maugre all our unkind complaints and suspicions, he is still working wonderfully for us, causing light to shine out of darkness, and doing us good in defiance of ourselves.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

TO MR. B———, JUN.

August 24, 1774.

DEAR SIR,

BE lowness of your voice, and a blameable absence of mind on my part, prevented me from understanding what you said when you took your leave of me; nor did I just at that instant recollect that you were so soon going away. I could not otherwise have parted with you, without a particular expression of my warmest wishes for your welfare, and commending you with an emotion which my heart always feels for you to our God and the word of his grace. Permit me therefore, by writing, to assure you, so far as I can answer for myself, that the request you were pleased to make for my remembrance will not be forgotten by me.

You are going abroad: you will carry with you, I doubt not, the best advice, strengthened by the authority and affection of parents, whom you greatly love and greatly reverence. This may seem to make anything a stranger can offer unnecessary, if not impertinent; yet, confiding in your candour and in your good opinion of my intention, I shall venture to let my pen run on a little longer. Not only my wishes, but my hopes are strong in your behalf. Perhaps there is hardly a young man in the kingdom, born to a fortune, who is setting out in life upon equal advantages with yourself. How many, at your years, who have been brought up in affluence, are unprincipled, uninstructed, and have already entered upon a course of dissipation and folly, in which it is impossible they themselves can find satisfaction, and which, unless they are reclaimed from it by an almighty arm, will infallibly preclude them from usefulness and esteem; whereas your early years have been successfully employed in the pursuit of knowledge, and your education formed under the most animating and endearing influence; and the Lord has furnished you with every natural ability of body and mind, which may qualify you to serve him in that situation of life which his providence has allotted you.

What may I not, then, further hope from these beginnings, especially as it is easy to observe, that he has given you an amiable and promising disposition of spirit, and has not only preserved you from being hurried down the stream of a giddy world, but enabled you to account the tender restraint under which you have been educated, not a yoke, but a privilege.

I sympathize with you at what you will feel when you are first separated from your happy family. But the Lord God, who is the sun and shield of those who fear him, will be always near you! His favour is the one thing needful, which no outward advantages can compensate the want of; and the right knowledge of him is the one thing needful, which no human teaching can communicate.

Were I more intimate with you, I could have asked the question, and perhaps received the satisfaction to know, that you have already begun to consider him in this light; that you feel a vanity in science, an emptiness

in creatures, and find that you have desires, which only He who gave them can satisfy. I trust it either is, or will be thus. As to learning, though it is useful when we know how to make a right use of it, yet, considered as in our own power, and to those who trust to it, without seeking a superior guidance, it is usually the source of perplexity, strife, scepticism, and infidelity. It is indeed like a sword in a madman's hands, which gives him the more opportunity of hurting himself and others. As to what the world calls pleasure, there is so little in it, that even the philosophers of old, or many of them, though they had little of value to substitute in its room, could despise it. You will perhaps meet with some, who will talk another language, who will pretend to be too wise to submit to the Bible, and too happy in worldly things, to expect or desire any happiness besides; but I trust you have seen enough to enable you to treat such persons with the pity, and such pretensions with the contempt, they deserve.

Should we set our concerns with an eternal world aside for a moment, it would be easy to demonstrate that religion is necessary, in order to make the most of this life, and to enjoy temporal good with the highest relish. In such a world as this, where we are every moment liable to so many unforeseen and unavoidable contingencies, a man without religion may be compared to a ship in a storm, without either rudder, anchor, or pilot.. But then, the religion which only deserves the name, must come from above: it must be suited to the state and wants of a sinner, it must be capable of comforting the heart, it must take away the sting and dread of death, and fix our confidence upon one who is always able to help us. Such is the religion of Jesus, such are its effects, and such are the criteria whereby we are to judge of the various forms and schemes under which it is proposed to us. But I forbear; I am only reminding you of what you know, and what you have known to be verified by living and dying examples. This happiness, my dear Sir, is open to you, to all who seek. He is enthroned in heaven, but prayer will bring him down to the heart. Indeed, he is always beforehand with us; and if we feel one desire towards him, we may accept it as a token that he gave it us to encourage us to ask for more.

May he be your guide and guard, be with you at all times, and in all places, and bring you back to your father's house in peace. Should I live to see that day, you have few friends whose congratulations would be warmer or more sincere than mine; and if, when you are settled and at leisure, you will afford me a letter, it will be both a pleasure and a favour to, dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTER IX.

TO MISS M—— B——.

November 11, 1775.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

OUR late visit to —— was very pleasant to myself; if any thing passed that was of service to you, we know to whom the thanks are due; for we can neither communicate nor receive any thing, but so far as he is pleased to enable us. One reason why he often disappoints us is, that we may learn to depend on him alone. We are prone, as you observe, to rest too much upon sensible comforts, yet they are very desirable; only as to the measure and seasons, it is well to be submissive to his will, to be thankful for them when we have them, and humbly waiting for them when we have them not. They are not, however, the proper ground of our hope; a good hope springs from such a sense of our wants, and such a persuasion of his power and grace, as engages the heart to venture, upon the warrant of his promises, to trust in him for salvation. In a sense, we are often hindering him by our impatience and unbelief; but, strictly speaking, when he really begins the good work, and gives us a desire which will be satisfied with nothing short of himself, he will not be hindered from carrying it on; for he has said, I will work, and none shall let it. Ah! had it depended upon myself, upon my wisdom or faithfulness, I should have hindered him to purpose, and ruined myself long ago. How often have I grieved and resisted his Spirit! but hereby I have learned more of his patience and tenderness than I could otherwise have known. He knows our frame, and what effects our evil nature, fomented by the artifices of Satan, will have; he sees us from first to last. A thousand evils arise in our hearts. A thousand wrongnesses in our conduct, which, as they do arise, are new to ourselves, and perhaps, at some times, we were ready to think we were incapable of such things; but none of them are new to him, to whom past, present, and future are the same. The foresight of them did not prevent his calling us by his grace. Though he knew we were vile, and should prove ungrateful and unfaithful, yet he would be found of us; he would knock at the door of our hearts, and gain himself an entrance. Nor shall they prevent his accomplishing his gracious purpose. It is our part to be abased before him, and quietly to hope and wait for his salvation, in the use of his appointed means. The power, success, and blessing, are wholly from himself. To make us more sensible of this, he often withdraws from our perceptions; and as, in the absence of the sun, the wild beasts of the forest roam abroad;

so, when Jesus hides himself, we presently perceive what is in our hearts, and what a poor shift we can make without him; when he returns, his light chaces the evils away, and we are well again. However, they are not dead when most controuled by his presence.

It is your great and singular mercy, my dear Miss, that he has taught you to seek him so early in life. You are entered in the way of salvation, but you must not expect all at once. The work of grace is compared to the corn, and to a building; the growth of the one, and the carrying forward of the other, are gradual. In a building, for instance, if it be large, there is much to be done in preparing and laying the foundation, before the walls appear above ground; much is doing within, when the work does not seem, perhaps, to advance without; and when it is considerably forward, yet being encumbered with scaffolds and rubbish, a byestander sees it at a great disadvantage, and can form but an imperfect judgment of it. But all this while the architect himself, even from the laying of the first stone, conceives of it according to the plan and design he has formed; he prepares and adjusts the materials, disposing each in its proper time and place, and views it in idea as already finished. In due season it is completed, but not in a day. The top-stone is fixed, and then, the scaffolds and rubbish being removed, it appears to others as he intended it should be. Men indeed often plan what, for want of skill or ability, or from unforeseen disappointments, they are unable to execute. But nothing can disappoint the heavenly Builder; nor will he ever be reproached with forsaking the work of his own hands, or beginning that which he could not or would not accomplish, Phil. i. 6. Let us therefore be thankful for beginnings, and patiently wait the event. His enemies strive to retard the work, as they did when the Jews, by his order, set about rebuilding the temple, yet it was finished in defiance of them all.

Believe me to be, &c.

LETTER X.

April 29, 1776.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

I THANK you for your last; and I rejoice in e Lord's goodness to you. To be drawn love, exempted from those distressing ter-s and temptations which some are beset h; to be favoured with the ordinances and ns of grace, and connected with those, l with those only, who are disposed and alified to assist and encourage you in seek-; the Saviour; these are peculiar privileges, ich all concur in your case; he loves you, deals gently with you, he provides well for you, and accompanies every outward privilege with his special blessing; and I trust he will lead you on from strength to strength, and shew you still greater things than you have yet seen. They whom he teaches are always increasing in knowledge, both of themselves and of him. The heart is deep, and, like Ezekiel's vision, presents so many chambers of imagery, one within another, that it requires time to get a considerable acquaintance with it, and we shall never know it thoroughly. It is now more than twenty-eight years since the Lord began to open mine to my own view; and from that time to this, almost every day has discovered to me something which till then was unobserved; and the farther I go, the more I seem convinced that I have entered but a little way. A person that travels in some parts of Derbyshire may easily be satisfied that the country is cavernous; but how large, how deep, how numerous, the caverns may be, which are hidden from us by the surface of the ground, and what is contained in them, are questions which our nicest inquiries cannot fully answer. Thus I judge of my heart, that it is very deep and dark, and full of evil; but as to particulars, I know not one of a thousand.

And if our own hearts are beyond our comprehension, how much more incomprehensible is the heart of Jesus! If sin abounds in us, grace and love superabound in him; his ways and thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth; his love has a height, and depth, and length, and breadth, that passeth all knowledge; and his riches of grace are unsearchable riches, Eph. iii. 8, 18, 19. All that we have received or can receive from him, or know of him in this life, compared with what he is in himself, or what he has done for us, is but as the drop of a bucket compared with the ocean, or a single ray of light in respect of the sun. The waters of the sanctuary flow to us at first almost upon a level, ankle deep, so graciously does the Lord condescend to our weakness: but they rise as we advance, and constrain us to cry out with the apostle, O the depth! We find before us, as Dr. Watts beautifully expresses it,

> A sea of love and grace unknown,
> Without a bottom or a shore.

O the excellency of the knowledge of Christ! It will be growing upon us through time, yea, I believe through eternity. What an astonishing and what a cheering thought, that this high and lofty One should unite himself to our nature, that so, in a way worthy of his adorable perfections, he might by his Spirit, unite us to himself! Could such a thought have arisen in our hearts, without the warrant of his word (but it is a thought which no created mind was capable of conceiving till he revealed it), it would have been pre

sumption and blasphemy; but now he has made it known, it is the foundation of our hope, and an exhaustible spring of life and joy. Well may we say, Lord, what is man that thou shouldst thus visit him!

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

September 3, 1776.

MY DEAR MISS M——,

WE saw no danger upon the road homeward: but my judgment tells me we are always upon the brink of danger, though we see it not; and that, without the immediate protection and care of him who preserveth the stars in their courses, there could be no travelling safely a few miles, nor even sitting in safety by the fire-side. But with him we are safe in all places and circumstances, till our race is done, and his gracious purposes concerning us, in the present life, are completely answered; then he will call us home, that we may see his face, and be with him for ever, and then it will not much signify what messenger he shall be pleased to send for us.

While he took care of us abroad, he watched over our concerns at home likewise; so that we found all well upon our return, and met with nothing to grieve us. Many go out and return home no more, and many find distressing things have happened in their absence; but we have to set up our Ebenezer, and to say, Hitherto he has helped us. Assist me to praise him. The Lord is leading you in the good old way, in which you may perceive the footsteps of his flock who have gone before you. They had in their day the same difficulties, fears, and complaints, as we have, and through mercy we partake of the same consolation which supported and refreshed them; and the promises which they trusted and found faithful, are equally sure to us. It is still true, that they who believe shall never be confounded. If left to ourselves, we should have built upon sand: but he has provided and revealed a sure foundation, removed our natural prejudices against it; and now, though rains, and floods, and storms assault our building, it cannot fall, for it is founded upon a rock. The suspicions and fears which arise in an awakened mind, proceed, in a good measure, from remaining unbelief; but not wholly so, for there is a jealousy and diffidence of ourselves, a wariness owing to a sense of the deceitfulness of our hearts, which is a grace and a gift of the Lord. Some people who have much zeal, but are destitute of this jealous fear may be compared to a ship that spreads a great deal of sail, but is not properly ballasted, and is therefore in danger of being overset whenever a storm comes. A sincere person has many reasons for distrusting his own judgment; is sensible of the vast importance of the case, and afraid of too hastily concluding in his own favour, and therefore not easly satisfied. However, this fear, though useful especially to young beginners, is not comfortable; and they who simply wait upon Jesus, are gradually freed from it, in proportion as their knowledge of him, and their experience of his goodness, increases. He has a time for settling and establishing them in himself, and his time is best. We are hasty, and would be satisfied at once, but his word is, Tarry thou the Lord's leisure. The work of grace is not like Jonah's gourd, which sprang up and flourished in a night, and as quickly withered, but rather like the oak, which, from a little acorn and a tender plant, advances with an almost imperceptible growth from year to year, till it becomes a broad spreading and deep-rooted tree, and then it stands for ages. The christian oak shall grow and flourish for ever. When I see any soon after they appear to be awakened, making a speedy profession of great joy, before they have a due acquaintance with their own hearts, I am in pain for them. I am not sorry to hear them afterwards complain that their joys are gone, and they are almost at their wits end; for without some such check, to make them feel, their weakness and dependence, I seldom find them turn out well; either their fervour insensibly abates till they become quite cold, and sink into the world again, (of which I have seen many instances), or if they do not give up all, their walk is uneven, and their spirit has not that savour of brokenness and true humility which is a chief ornament of our holy profession. If they do not feel the plague of their hearts at first, they find it out afterwards, and too often manifest it to others. Therefore though I know the Spirit of the Lord is free, and will not be confined to our rules, and there may be excepted cases; yet, in general, I believe the old proverb, "Soft and fair goes far," will hold good in christian experience. Let us be thankful for the beginnings of grace, and wait upon our Saviour patiently for the increase. And as we have chosen him for our physician, let us commit ourselves to his management, and not prescribe to him what he shall prescribe for us. He knows us and he loves us better than we do ourselves, and will do all things well.

You say, "It never came with power and life to my soul, that he died for me." If you mean, you never had any extraordinary sudden manifestation, something like a vision or a voice from heaven, confirming it to you, I can say the same. But I know he died for sinners; I know I am a sinner: I know he invites them that are ready to perish; I am such a one: I know, upon his own invitation, I have committed myself to him; and I

know, by the effects, that he has been with me hitherto, otherwise I should have been an apostate long ago; and therefore I know that he died for me; for had he been pleased to kill me (as he justly might have done), he would not have shewn me such things as these.

> If I must perish, would the Lord
> Have taught my heart to love his word?
> Would he have given me eyes to see
> My danger and my remedy?
> Reveal'd his name, and bid me pray,
> Had he resolv'd to say me nay?

I know that I am a child, because he teaches me to say, Abba, Father. I know that I am his, because he has enabled me to choose him for mine. For such a choice and desire could never have taken place in my heart, if he had not placed it there himself. By nature I was too blind to know him, too proud to trust him, too obstinate to serve him, too base-minded to love him; the enmity I was filled with against his government, righteousness, and grace, was too strong to be subdued by any power but his own. The love I bear to him is but a faint and feeble spark, but it is an emanation from himself. He kindled it, and he keeps it alive; and because it is his work, I trust many waters shall not quench it.

I have only room to assure you, that I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND Mr. R———.

LETTER I.

April 15, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR,

- - - - - - - -

I OFTEN rejoice on your behalf. Your call out of the world was a singular and comfortable instance of the power of grace. And when I consider the difficulties and snares of your situation, and that you have been kept in the middle path, preserved from undue compliances on the one hand, and unnecessary singularities on the other, I cannot doubt but the Lord has hitherto helped and guided you. Indeed, you have need of his guidance. At your years, and with your expectations in life, your health firm, and your natural spirits lively, you are exposed to many snares; yet, if the Lord keeps you sensible of your danger, and dependent upon him, you will walk safely. Your security, success, and comfort, depend upon him; and in the way of means, chiefly upon your being preserved in an humble sense of your own weakness. It is written, "Fear not, I am with thee." It is written again, "Blessed is the man who feareth always." There is a perfect harmony in those seemingly different texts. May the wisdom that cometh from above teach you and me to keep them both united in our view. If the Lord be with us, we have no cause of fear. His eye is upon us, his arm over us, his ear open to our prayer; his grace sufficient, his promise unchangeable. Under his protection, though the path of duty should lie through fire and water, we may cheerfully and confidently pursue it. On the other hand, our hearts are so deceitful, fallible, and frail; our spiritual enemies so subtle, watchful, and powerful; and they derive so many advantages from the occasions of every day, in which we are unavoidably and unexpectedly concerned; there is so much combustible within, and so many temptations arising from without, capable of setting all in a flame; that we cannot be too jealous of ourselves and our circumstances. The duke of Devonshire's motto, if I mistake not, well suits the christian, *Cavendo tutus*. When we can say, in the psalmist's spirit, "Hold thou me up,' we may warrantably draw his conclusion, "and I shall be safe;" but the moment we lean to our own understanding, we are in imminent danger of falling. The enemy who wars against our souls is a consummate master in his way, fertile in stratagems, and equally skilful in carrying on his assaults by sap or by storm. He studies us, if I may so say, all around, to discover our weak sides; and he is a very Proteus for changing his appearances, and can appear as a sly serpent, a roaring lion, or an angel of light, as best suits his purpose. It is a great mercy to be in some measure acquainted with his devices, and aware of them. They who wait humbly upon the Lord, and consult carefully at his word and throne of grace, are made wiser than their enemy, and enabled to escape and withstand his wiles. I know you will not expect me to apologise for putting you in mind of these things, though you know them. I have a double warrant; the love I bear you, and the Lord's command, Heb. iii. 13. Use the like freedom with me; I need it, and hope to be thankful for it, and accept it as one of the best proofs of friendship.

The Lord bless and keep you. Pray for us, and believe me to be sincerely yours.

LETTER II.

July 13, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE Lord, who mercifully called you out of a state of thoughtless dissipation, and has hitherto been with you, will, I trust, sweeten all your trials, and cause his light to shine upon your paths. It seems probable, that if you pay a just regard to your father's negative, which I really think he has a right to expect from you, and, at the same time, make a steady and conscientious use of that negative, which he generously allows you to put upon his proposals, to which I think you have an equal right; I say, while things remain in this situation, and you continue to think differently, it seems probable that the hour of your exchanging a single for the marriage state is yet at some distance. But let not this grieve you. The Lord is all-sufficient. A lively sense of his love, a deep impression of eternity, a heart filled with zeal for his cause, and a thirst for the good of souls, will, I hope, enable you to make a cheerful sacrifice of whatever has no necessary connection with your peace and his service. And you may rest assured, that whenever he, who loves you better than you do yourself, sees it best for you, upon the whole, to change your condition, he will bring it about, he will point out the person, prepare the means, and secure the success, by his providence, and the power he has over every heart. And you shall see that all previous difficulties were either gracious preventions, which he threw in the way to prevent your taking a wrong step, or temporary bars, which, by his removing them afterwards, should give you opportunity of more clearly perceiving his care and interposition in your favour. In the mean time, remember your high calling. You are a minister and an ambassador of Christ; you are entrusted with the most honourable and important employment that can engage and animate the heart of man. Ταυτα μελετα, εν τουτοις ισθι, ινα σου η προκοπη φανερη.*

Filled and fired with a constraining sense of the love of Jesus, and the worth of souls; impressed with an ardour to carry war into Satan's kingdom, to storm his strongholds, and rescue his captives; you will have little leisure to think of any thing else. How does the love of glory stimulate the soldier, make him forget and forego a thousand personal tendernesses, and prompt him to cross oceans, to traverse deserts, to scale mountains, and plunge to the greatest hardships and the thickest dangers! He does it for a corruptible crown, a puff of breath, an empty fame; his highest prospect is the applause and favour of his prince. We likewise are soldiers; we have a Prince and Captain who deserves our all. They who know him, and have hearts to conceive of his excellence, and to feel their obligations to him, cannot indeed seek their own glory, but his glory is dearer to them than a thousand lives. They owe him their souls, for he redeemed them with blood, his own blood; and by his grace he subdued and pardoned them when they were rebels, and in arms against him. Therefore they are not their own, they would not be their own. When his standard is raised, when his enemies are in motion, when his people are to be rescued; they go forth clothed with his panoply, they fight under his eye, they are sure of his support, and he shews them the conqueror's crown. O, when they think of that ευ δουλε αγαθε,† with which he has promised to welcome them home, when the campaign is over, hard things seem easy, and bitter things sweet; they count nothing, not even their own lives, dear, so that they may finish their course with joy. May the Lord make us thus minded; give us a hearty concern for his business, and he has engaged to take care of ours; and nothing that can conduce to our real comfort and usefulness shall be withheld.

Believe me to be sincerely yours.

LETTER III.

December 21, 1776

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR letter brought me tidings of joy, and then furnished me with materials for a bonfire upon the occasion. It was an act of passive obedience to burn it, but I did obey. I congratulate you upon the happy issue to which the Lord has brought your affairs. I see that his good Spirit and good providence have been and are with you. I doubt not but your union with Miss —— will be a mutual blessing, and, on your part, heightened by being connected with such a family. I could enlarge upon this head, if my letter likewise was to be burnt as soon as you have read it. I look upon the friendship the Lord has given me there as one of my prime privileges, and I hope I shall always be thankful that it proved a means of introducing you into it.

I congratulate you likewise upon your accession to ——, not because it is a good living, in a genteel neighbourhood, and a fine country, but because I believe the Lord sends you there for fulfilling the desires he has given you of being useful to souls. Church-preferment, in any other view, is dreadful; and I would as soon congratulate a man upon seeing a millstone tied about his neck, to sink

* 1 Tim iv. 15, 16.

† Well done, good servant.

him into the depths of the sea, as upon his obtaining what is called a good living, except I thought him determined to spend and be spent in the cause of the gospel. A parish is an awful millstone indeed to those who see nothing valuable in the flock but the fleece; but the Lord has impressed your heart with a sense of the glory and importance of his truth, and the worth of souls, and animated your zeal by the most powerful motive, the knowledge of his constraining love. Your case is extraordinary. Perhaps, when you review in your mind the circle of your former gay acquaintance, you may say, with Job's servant, 'I only am escaped alive:" The rest are either removed into an eternal state, or are still hurrying down the stream of dissipation, and living without God in the world. Yet there was a time when there seemed no more probability on your side than on theirs, that you should obtain mercy, and be called to the honour of preaching the glorious gospel. You are setting out with every possible advantage. In early life, with a cheerful flow of spirits, affluent circumstances, and now, to crown all, the Lord gives you the very choice of your heart in a partner; one who, besides deserving and meeting your affection, will, I am persuaded, be a real help-meet to you in your spiritual walk. How much is here to be thankful for!

I trust the Lord has given you, and will maintain in you, a right spirit, so as not to rest in his gifts, but to hold them in connection with the love and favour of the giver. It is a low time with us, when the greatest assemblage of earthly blessings can seem to satisfy us without real communion with him. His grace is sufficient for you; but undoubtedly such a scene of prosperity as seems to lie before you, is full of snares, and calls for a double effort of watchfulness and prayer. Your situation will fix many eyes upon you, and Satan will doubtless watch you, and examine every corner of the hedge around you, to see if he can find a gap by which to enter. We have but few rich gospel-ministers; but it is too evident that he has found a way to damp the zeal and hurt the spirits of some of those few, who for a time acted nobly, and seemed to walk out of the reach of the allurements of the world. I am not jealous of you; I feel a comfortable persuasion, that the Lord has taken a fast hold of your heart, and given you a fast hold of his almighty arm; yet I believe you will not be displeased with me for dropping a hint of this kind, and at this time.

You have heard of the trial with which the Lord has been pleased to visit us: it still continues, though considerably alleviated. It is tempered with many mercies, and I hope he disposes us in a measure to submission. I trust it will be for good. My dear friend you are now coming into my school, where you will learn, as occasions offer, to feel more in the person of another than in your own. But be not discouraged, the Lord only afflicts for our good. It is necessary that our sharpest trials should sometimes spring from our dearest comforts, else we should be in danger of forgetting ourselves, and setting up our rest here. In such a world, and with such hearts as we have, we shall often need something to prevent our cleaving to the dust, to quicken us to prayer, and to make us feel that our dependence for one hour's peace is upon the Lord alone. I am ready to think I have known as much of the good and happiness which this world can afford, as most people who live in it. I never saw the person with whom I wished to exchange in temporals. And for many years past I have thought my trials have been light and few, compared with what many, or most of the Lord's people have endured. And yet, though in the main possessed of my own wishes, when I look back upon the twenty-seven years past, I am ready to style them, with Jacob, few and evil; and to give the sum-total of their contents in Solomon's words,—all is vanity. If I take these years to pieces, I see a great part of them was filled up with sins, sorrows, and inquietudes. The pleasures too are gone, and have no more real existence than the baseless fabric of a dream. The shadows of the evening will soon begin to come over us; and if our lives are prolonged, a thousand pains and infirmities, from which the Lord has in a remarkable measure exempted us hitherto, will probably overtake us, and at last we must feel the parting pang. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Sin has so envenomed the soil of this earth, that the amaranth will not grow upon it. But we are hasting to a better world, and to bright unclouded skies, where our sun will no more go down, and where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

September 27, 1777.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Mr. —— called upon us on Thursday evening, and from that hour my thoughts, when awake, have seldom been absent from ——. Few people are better qualified to feel for you, yourself and the family excepted; perhaps there is no person living more nearly interested in what concerns Mrs. —— than myself. I could not therefore, at such a time as this, refrain from writing; and glad should I be, if the Lord may help me to drop a suitable word, and accompany it with a blessing to you in the reading.

I am glad to be assured, though I expected no less, that Mrs. —— happily feels

herself safe in the Lord's hand, and under the care of the Good Shepherd and Saviour, to whom she has often committed herself; and finds him faithful to his promise, giving her strength in her soul according to her day, and enabling her quietly to submit to his holy, wise, and gracious will. And it is my prayer, that he may strengthen you likewise, and reveal his own all-sufficiency so clearly and powerfully to your heart, that you may not be afraid of any event, but cheerfully rely upon him, to be all that to you, in every circumstance and change, which his promise warrants you to expect.

I am willing to hope, that this is but a short season of anxiety, appointed for the exercise of your faith and patience, and to give you, in his good time, a signal proof of his power and goodness in answering prayer. He sometimes brings us into such a situation that the help of creatures is utterly unavailing, that we may afterwards be more clearly sensible of his interposition. Then we experimentally learn the vanity of all things here below, and are brought to a more immediate and absolute dependence upon himself. We have need of having these lessons frequently inculcated upon us; but when his end is answered, how often, after he has caused grief, does he shew his great compassions, and save us from our fears by an outstretched arm, and such a seasonable and almost unexpected relief, as constrains us to cry out, What has God wrought? and who is a God like unto thee? Such, I hope, will be the issue of your present trial, and that he who gave her to you at first will restore her to you again. I see you in the furnace; but the Lord is sitting by it as a refiner of silver, to moderate the fire, and manage the process, so that you shall lose nothing but dross, and be brought forth refined as gold, to praise his name. Apparent difficulties, however great, are nothing to him. If he speaks it is done; for to God the Lord belong the issues from death. Should his pleasure be otherwise, and should he call your dear partner to a state of glory before you, still I know he is able to support you. What he does, however painful to the flesh, must be right, because he does it. Having bought us with his blood, and saved our souls from hell, he has every kind of right to dispose of us and ours as he pleases; and this we are sure of, he will not lay so much upon us as he freely endured for us, and he can make us amends for all we suffer, and for all we lose, by the light of his countenance. A few years will set all to rights; and they who love him and are beloved by him, though they may suffer as others, shall not sorrow as others, for the Lord will be with them here, and he will soon have them with him; there all tears shall be wiped from their eyes.

Perhaps I know as well how to calculate the pain of such a separation as any one who has not actually experienced it. Many a time the desire of my eyes has been threatened, many a time my heart has been brought low; but from what I have known at such seasons, I have reason to hope, that had it been his pleasure to bring upon me the thing that I feared, his everlasting arm would have upheld me from sinking under the stroke. As ministers, we are called to comfort the Lord's afflicted people, and to tell them, the knowledge of his love is a cordial able to keep the soul alive under the sharpest trials. We must not wonder that he sometimes put us in a way of showing that we do not deal in unfelt truths, but that we find ourselves that solid consolation in the gospel which we encourage others to expect from it. You have now such an occasion of glorifying the Lord, I pray he may enable you to improve it, and that all around you may see that he is with you, and that his good word is the support and anchor of your soul. Then I am sure, if it upon the whole is best for you, he will give you the desire of your heart, and you shall yet live to praise him together.

I am, &c.

LETTER

TO

THE REVEREND Mr. O———.

April 3, 1759.

DEAR SIR,

You see I have prevented you in your promise of writing first; and, having found a pretext for troubling Mr. ——, I was willing to venture upon you without any, unless you will let me plead a desire of shewing you how welcome your correspondence would be to me. I know not if my heart was ever more united to any person, in so short a space of time, than to you; and what engaged me so much was, the spirit of meekness and of love (that peculiar and inimitable mark of true christianity) which I observed in you. I mean it not to your praise. May all the praise be to him, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, who alone maketh the best to differ from the worst; but I think I may well mention, to your encouragement, that all who conversed with you greatly regret your speedy departure; and I am persuaded the same temper, the same candour, will make you acceptable, honourable, and useful, wherever you go. Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, and the peace-makers; they shall obtain the mercy they want, and possess the peace they love. They shall inherit the earth. The earth, sinful and miserable as it is, shall be worthy to be called an inheritance to them, for they shall enjoy a comparative heaven in it. They shall be called the children of God, though dignified with no title among men. Alas, how much are these things overlooked, even by many who, I would hope, are real believers! Methinks a very different spirit from that of the church of Laodicea, is to be seen amongst us, though perhaps it is not easy to say which is the best of the two. That was neither cold nor hot, this *(mirabile dictu)* is both cold and hot at once, and both to the extreme. Hot, hasty, and arbitrary in those few things where mediocrity is a virtue; but cool and remiss in those great points, where the application of the whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, is so absolutely necessary, and so positively enjoined. Surely there is too much room for this observation, and I perhaps stand self-condemned in making it.

I hope you will take opportunity to improve your interest in Mr. —— by letter. He expressed much satisfaction in the hour he spent with you before you sailed, and a great regard for you; therefore would, I doubt not, give you a fair hearing; and the phrase *litera scripta manet* is true in more senses than one. He makes such large concessions sometimes, that I am apt to think he is conscious of the weakness of his own argument; and then he is as soon angry with himself for complying so far, and flies off to the other extreme. Yet, for the most part, when he speaks plain, and is not restrained by complaisance for particular persons, he appears not only a stranger to experimental religion, but averse to the notion, and generally inclined to treat it with levity. His obstacles are very many and very great; his reputation as a learned man, his years, his regular life, and perhaps, above all, his performances in print, especially his last book, are so many barriers that must be broke through before conviction can reach him. But the grace of God can do all this and more; and indeed, when I think of the many truly valuable parts of his character, and the indefatigable pains he has taken in his researches after truth, I am willing to hope, that the Lord will at length teach him the true wisdom, and enable him, however hard it may seem, to give up his own attainments, and sit down like a little child at the feet of Jesus.

I hope to hear soon and often from you. I number my christian correspondents among

my principal blessings, a few judicious pious friends, to whom, when I can get leisure to write, I send my heart by turns. I can trust them with my inmost sentiments, and can write with no more disguise than I think. I shall rejoice to add you to the number, if you can agree to take me as I am, as I think you will, and suffer me to commit my whole self to paper, without respect to names, parties, and sentiments. I endeavour to observe my Lord's commands, to call no man master upon earth; yet I desire to own and honour the image of God wherever I find it. I dare not say I have no bigotry, for I know not myself; and remember, to my shame, that formerly, when I ignorantly professed myself free from it, I was indeed over-run with it; but this I can say, I allow it not: I strive and pray against it; and thus far, by the grace of God, I have attained, that I find my heart as much united to many who differ from me in some points, as to any who agree with me in all. I set no value upon any doctrinal truth, farther than it has a tendency to promote practical holiness. If others should think those things hinderances which I judge to be helps in this respect, I am content they should go on in their own way, according to the light God has given them, provided they will agree with me εν τω στανγκυ. If it should be asked, which are the necessary things? I answer, Those in which the spiritual worshippers of all ages and countries have been agreed. Those, on the contrary, are mere subordinate matters, in which the best men, those who have been the most eminent for faith, prayer, humility, and nearness to God, always have been, and still are, divided in their judgments. Upon this plan I should think it no hard matter to draw up a form of sound words (whether dignified with the name of a creed or no, I care not), to which true believers of all sorts and sizes would unanimously subscribe. Suppose it ran something in the following manner:—I believe that sin is the most hateful thing in the world; that I and all men are by nature in a state of wrath and depravity, utterly unable to sustain the penalty, or to fulfil the commands of God's holy law; and that we have no sufficiency of ourselves to think a good thought. I believe that Jesus Christ is the chief among ten thousands; that he came into the world to save the chief of sinners, by making a propitiation for sin by his death, by paying a perfect obedience to the law in our behalf; and that he is now exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins to all that believe; and that he ever liveth to make intercession for us. I believe that the Holy Spirit (the gift of God through Jesus Christ) is the sure and only guide into all truth, and the common privilege of all believers; and under his influence, I believe the holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, and to furnish us thoroughly for every good work. I believe that love to God, and to man, for God's sake, is the essence of religion, and the fulfilling of the law; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that those who, by a patient course in well-doing, seek glory, honour, and immortality, shall receive eternal life; and I believe that this reward is not of debt, but of grace, even to the praise and glory of that grace whereby he has made us accepted in the Beloved. Amen.

I pretend not to accuracy in this hasty draught; they are only outlines, which, if you please to retouch, and fill up at your leisure, I hope you will favour me with a sight of it. I fear I have tired you, and shall only add my prayers, that the Lord may be with you, and crown your labours of love with success, that you may hereafter shine among those who have been instrumental in turning many to righteousness.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND Mr. P———.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

THE account which I received by Mr. C——, and by the letter which he brought from you, of your welfare and the welfare of your people, was very pleasing, though indeed no more than I expected. I believed, from the first of your going to S——, that you would like the people, and I believed the Lord had given you that frame of spirit which he has promised to bless. What reason have we to praise him for the knowledge of his gospel, and for the honour of being called to preach it to others! and likewise that he has been pleased to cast your lot and mine amongst a people who value it, and to crown our poor labours with some measure of acceptance and usefulness. How little did we think, in the unawakened part of our life, to what it was his good pleasure to reserve us!

The Lord is pleased, in a measure, to show me the suitableness and necessity of an humble dependent frame of heart, a ceasing from self, and a reliance upon him in the due use of appointed means; I am far from having attained, but I hope I am pressing, at least seeking after it. I wish to speak the word simply and experimentally, and to be so engaged with the importance of the subject, the worth of souls, and the thought that I am speaking in the name and presence of the Most High God, as that I might, if possible, forget every thing else. This would be an attainment indeed! More good might be expected from a broken discourse, delivered in such a frame, than from the most advantageous display of knowledge and gifts without it. Not that I would undervalue propriety and pertinence of expression; it is our duty to study to find out acceptable words, and to endeavour to appear as workmen that need not be ashamed; but those who have most ability in this way, have need of a double guard of grace and wisdom, lest they be tempted to trust in it, or to value themselves upon it. They that trust in the Lord shall never be moved; and they that abase themselves before him, he will exalt. I am well persuaded that your conduct and views have been agreeable to these sentiments; and therefore the Lord has supported, encouraged, and owned you; and I trust he will still bless you, and make you a blessing to many. He that walketh humbly walketh surely.

Believe me to be, &c.

LETTER II.

August 14, 1770.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter did me good when I received it, at least gave me much pleasure; and I think it has given me a lift while I have been just now reading it. I know not that I ever had those awful views of sin which you speak of; and though I believe I should be better for them, I dare not seriously wish for them. There is a petition which I have heard in public prayer, "Lord, show us the evil of ou hearts." To this petition I cannot venture to set my Amen, at least not without a qualification. Shew me enough of thyself to balance the view, and then show me what thou pleasest. I think I have a very clear and strong conviction in my judgment, that I am vile and worthless, that my heart is full of evil, only evil, and that continually. I know

something of it too experimentally; and therefore, judging of the whole by the sample, though I am not suitably affected with what I do see, I tremble at the thought of seeing more. A man may look with some pleasure upon the sea in a storm, provided he stands safe upon the land himself; but to be upon the sea in a storm, is quite another thing. And yet surely the coldness, worldliness, pride, and twenty other evils under which I groan, owe much of their strength to the want of that feeling sense of my own abominations with which you have been favoured:—I say favoured; for I doubt not but the Lord gave it you in mercy, and that it has proved, and will prove, a mercy to you, to make you more humble, spiritual, and dependent, as well as to increase your ability for preaching the gospel of his grace. Upon these accounts, I can assure you, that upon a first reading, and till I stopped a moment to count the cost, I was ready to envy you all that you had felt. I often seem to know what the scriptures teach, both of sin and grace, as if I knew them not: so faint and languid are my perceptions, I often seem to think and talk of sin without any sorrow, and of grace without any joy.

I have had some people awakened by dreams, as you had by streamers; but, for ought I know, we are no less instrumental to the good of these, than to any other person, upon whom, when we look, our hearts are ready to exult, and say, See what the Lord has done by me. I do not think that, strictly speaking, all the streamers of the north are able to awaken a dead soul. I suppose people may be terrified by them, and made thoughtful, but awakened only by the word. The streamers either sent them to hear the gospel, or roused them to attend to it; but it was the knowledge of the truth brought home to the heart, that did the business. Perhaps the streamers reminded them of what they had heard from you before. Two persons here, who lived like heathens, and never came to church, were alarmed by some terrifying dreams, and came out to hearing forthwith. There the Lord was pleased to meet with them. One of them died triumphing; the other, I hope, will do so when her time comes. Whatever means, instruments, or occasions he is pleased to employ, the work is all his own; and I trust you and I are made willing to give him all the glory, and to sink into the dust at the thought that he should ever permit us to take his holy name in our polluted lips.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

June 13, 1772.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU say that your experience agrees with mine. It must be so, because our hearts are alike. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, destitute of good, and prone to evil. This is the character of mankind universally, and those who are made partakers of grace are renewed but in part; the evil nature still cleaves to them, and the root of sin, though mortified, is far from being dead. While the cause remains it will have its effects, and while we are burdened with the body of this death, we must groan under it. But we need not be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, since we have in Jesus, a Saviour, a righteousness, an advocate, a shepherd. "He knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust." If sin abounds in us, grace abounds much more in him; nor would he suffer sin to remain in his people, if he did not know how to over-rule it, and make it an occasion of endearing his love and grace so much the more to their souls. The Lord forbid that we should plead his goodness as an encouragement to sloth and indifference. Humiliation, godly sorrow, and self-abasement become us; but at the same time, we may rejoice in the Lord. Though sin remains, it shall not have dominion over us; though it wars in us, it shall not prevail against us. We have a mercy-seat sprinkled with blood, we have an advocate with the Father, we are called to this warfare, and we fight under the eye of the Captain of our salvation, who is always near to renew our strength, to heal our wounds, and to cover our heads in the heat of battle. As ministers, we preach to those who have like passions and infirmities with ourselves, and by our own feelings, fears, and changes, we learn to speak a word in season to them that are weary, to warn those who stand, and to stretch out a hand of compassion towards them that are fallen; and to commend it to others, from our own experience, as a faithful saying, that Jesus came to save the chief of sinners. Besides, if the Lord is pleased to give us some liberty, acceptance, and success in preaching the gospel, we should be in great danger of running mad with spiritual pride, if the Lord did not permit us to feel the depravity and vileness of our hearts, and thereby keep us from forgetting what we are in ourselves.

With regard to your young people, you must expect to meet with some disappointment. Perhaps not every one of whom you have conceived hopes will stand, and some who do belong to the Lord are permitted to make sad mistakes for their future humiliation. It is our part to watch, warn, and ad-

monish, and we ought likewise to be concerned for those slips and miscarriages which we cannot prevent. A minister, if faithful, and of a right spirit, can have no greater joy than to see his people walking honourably and steadily in the truth; and hardly any thing will give him more sensible grief, than to see any of them taken in Satan's wiles. Yet still the gospel brings relief here. He is wiser than we are, and knows how to make those things subservient to promote his work, which we ought to guard against as evils and hindrances. We are to use the means. He is to rule the whole. If the faults of some are made warnings to others, and prove in the end occasions of illustrating the riches of divine grace, this should reconcile us to what we cannot help, though such considerations should not slacken our diligence in sounding an alarm, and reminding our hearers of their continual danger.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV

Jan. 26, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

I LATELY read, in the fifth volume of the Morning Exercises, a sermon of Mr. Baxter's, on Matth. v. 16. My mind is something impressed with the subject, and with his manner of treating it. Some of Mr. Baxter's sentiments in divinity are rather cloudy, and he sometimes, upon that account, met with but poor quarter from the staunch Calvinists of his day. But, by what I have read of him, where he is quiet, and not ruffled by controversy, he appears to me, notwithstanding some mistakes, to have been one of the greatest men of his age, and perhaps in fervour, spirituality, and success, more than equal, both as a minister and a christian, to some twenty taken together, of those who affect to undervalue him in this present day. There is a spirit in some passages of his "Saints Rest," his "Dying Thoughts," and other of his practical treatises, compared with which, many modern compositions, though well written and well meant, appear to me to great disadvantage. But I was speaking of his sermon. He points out the way at which we should aim to let our light shine in the world, for the glory of God, and the conviction and edification of men. I have mentioned where it is to be found, that, if you have the Morning Exercises, or if they should come in your way, you may look at it. I think you would like it. The perusal suggested to me some instruction, and much reproof. Alas! my friend, are we not too often chargeable with a sad, shameful selfishness and narrowness of spirit, far, very far different from that activity, enlargement, and generosity of soul, which such a gospel as we have received might be expected to produce? For myself I must plead guilty. It seems as if my heart was always awake, and keenly sensible to my own concernments, while those of my Lord and Master affect me much less forcibly, at least only by intervals. Were a stranger to judge of me by what I sometimes say in the pulpit, he might think that, like the angels, I had but two things in view—to do the will of God, and to behold his face. But, alas! would he not be almost as much mistaken, as if, seeing Mr. G—— in the character of a tragedy-hero, he should suppose him to be the very person whom he only represents? I hope Satan will never be able to persuade me that I am a mere hypocrite and stage-player; but sure I am, that there is so much hypocrisy in me, so many littlenesses and self-seekings insinuating into my plan of conduct, that I have humbling cause to account myself unworthy and unprofitable, and to say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord," I have some tolerable idea of what a christian ought to be, and it is, I hope, what I desire to be. A christian should be conformable to Christ in his spirit and in his practice; that is, he should be spiritually minded, dead to the world, filled with zeal for the glory of God, the spread of the gospel, and the good of souls. He should be humble, patient, meek, cheerful, thankful under all events and changes. He should account it the business and honour of his life to imitate him, who pleased not himself, who went about doing good, and has expressed to us the very feelings of his heart, in that divine aphorism, which surpasses all the fine admired sayings of the philosophers, as much as the sun outshines a candle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The whole deportment of a christian should shew that the knowledge of Jesus, which he has received from the gospel, affords him all he could expect from it,—a balm for every grief, an amends for every loss, a motive for every duty, a restraint from every evil, a pattern for every thing which he is called to do or suffer, and a principle sufficient to constitute the actions of every day, even in common life, acts of religion. He should (as the children of this world are wise to do in their generation) make every occurrence through which he passes subservient and subordinate to his main design. Gold is the worldly man's god, and his worship and service are uniform and consistent, not by fits and starts, but from morning to night, from the beginning to the end of the year, he is the same man. He will not slip an opportunity of adding to his pelf to-day, because he may have another to-morrow, but he heartily and eagerly embraces both; and so far as he carries his point, though his perseverance may expose him to the ridicule or reproach of his

neighbours, he thinks himself well paid, and says,

Populus me sibilat ; at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi, simul nummus contemplor in arca.

I am, &c.

LETTER V

Jan. — 1776.

DEAR SIR,

I MAY learn, only I am a sad dunce, by small and common incidents, as well as by some more striking and important turns in life, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. It is not for me to say, To-day or to-morrow I will do this or that. I cannot write a letter to a friend without leave or without help, for neither opportunity nor ability are at my own disposal. It is not needful that the Lord should raise a mountain in my way to stop my purpose ; if he only withdraw a certain kind of imperceptible support, which in general I have, and use without duly considering whose it is, then, in a moment, I feel myself unstrung and disabled, like a ship that has lost her masts, and cannot proceed till he is pleased to refit me and renew my strength. My pride and propensity to self-dependence render frequent changes of this kind necessary to me, or I should soon forget what I am, and sacrifice to my own drag. Therefore, upon the whole, I am satisfied, and see it best, that I should be absolutely poor and pennyless in myself, and forced to depend upon the Lord for the smallest things as well as the greatest. And if, by his blessing, my experience should at length tally with my judgment in this point, that without him I can do nothing, then I know I shall find it easy, through him, to do all things, for the door of his mercy is always open, and it is but Ask and have. But, alas! a secret persuasion (though contrary to repeated convictions) that I have something at home, too often prevents me from going to him for it, and then no wonder I am disappointed. The life of faith seems so simple and easy in theory, that I can point it out to others in few words ; but in practice it is very difficult, and my advances are so slow that I hardly dare say I get forward at all. It is a great thing indeed to have the spirit of a little child, so as to be habitually afraid of taking a single step without leading.

I have heard of you more than once since heard from you, and am glad to know the Lord is still with you ; I trust he has not withdrawn wholly from us. We have much cause for thankfulness and much for humiliation. Some have been removed, some are evidently ripening for glory, and now and then we have a new inquirer. But the progress of wickedness amongst the unconverted here is awful. Convictions, repeatedly stifled in many, have issued in a hardness and boldness in sinning which I believe is seldom found but in those places where the light of the gospel has been long resisted and abused. If my eyes suitably affected my heart, I should weep day and night upon this account, but, alas! I am too indifferent. I feel a woeful defect in my zeal for God and compassion for souls ; and when Satan and conscience charge me with cowardice, treachery, and stupidity, I know not what to reply. I am generally carried through my public work with some liberty ; and, because I am not put to shame before the people, I seem content and satisfied. I wish to be more thankful for what the Lord is pleased to do amongst us, but, at the same time, to be more earnest with him for a farther out-pouring of his Spirit. Assist me herein with your prayers.

As to my own private experience, the enemy is not suffered to touch the foundation of my faith and hope : thus far I have peace. But my conflicts and exercises with the effects of indwelling sin are very distressing. I cannot doubt of my state and acceptance, and yet it seems no one can have more cause for doubts and fears than myself, if such doubtings were at all encouraged by the gospel : but I see they are not ; I see that what I want and hope for, the Lord promises to do, for his own name's sake, and with a *non obstante* to all my vileness and perversion ; and I cannot question but he has given me (for how else could I have it?) a thirst for that communion with him, in love and conformity to his image, of which, as yet, I have experienced but very faint and imperfect beginnings. But if he has begun, I venture, upon his word, that he will not forsake the work of his own hands.

On public affairs I say but little. Many are censuring men and measures, but I would lay all the blame upon sin. It appears plain to me that the Lord has a controversy with us, and therefore I fear what we have yet seen is but the beginning of sorrows. I am ready to dread the event of this summer ; but I remember the Lord reigns. He has his own glory and the good of his church in view, and will not be disappointed. He knows how likewise to take care of those who fear him. I wish there was more sighing and mourning amongst professors, for the sins of the nation and the churches. But I must conclude, and am, &c.

LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

NO very considerable alteration has taken place since I wrote, except the death of Mrs. L——

who was removed to a better world in September last. The latter part of her course was very painful; but the Lord made her more than conqueror, and she had good cause to apply the apostle's words, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. She repeated that passage in her last illness, and chose it for her funeral text. She was a christian indeed. Her faith was great, and so were her trials. Now she is above them all, now she is before the throne. The good Lord help us to be followers of those who, through faith and patience, have attained to the hope set before them.

The number of professors still increases with us, and a greater number of persons affords a greater variety of cases, and gives greater scope to observe the workings of the heart and Satan. For seven years I had to say, that I had not seen a person of whom I had conceived a good hope go back, but I have met with a few disappointments since. However, upon the whole, I trust the Lord is still with us. The enemy tries to disturb and defile us, and if the Lord did not keep the city, the poor watchman would wake in vain. But the eye that never slumbereth nor sleepeth has been upon us for good; and, though we have cause of humiliation and complaint, we have likewise much cause of thankfulness. My health is still preserved; and I hope that the Lord does not suffer my desires of personal communion with him, and of usefulness in the ministry, to decline. He supplies me with fresh strength and matter in my public work: I hear now and then of one brought to inquire the way; and his presence is at times made known to many in the ordinances.

To combine zeal with prudence is indeed difficult There is often too much self in our zeal, and too much of the fear of man in our prudence. However, what we cannot attain by any skill or resolution of our own, we may hope in measure to receive from him who giveth liberally to those who seek him, and desire to serve him. Prudence is a word much abused, but there is a heavenly wisdom which the Lord has promised to give to those who humbly wait upon him for it. It does not consist in forming a bundle of rules and maxims, but in a spiritual taste and discernment, derived from an experimental knowledge of the truth, and of the heart of man as described in the word of God; and its exercise consists much in a simple dependence upon the Lord, to guide and prompt us in every action. We seldom act wrong when we truly depend upon him, and can cease from leaning to our own understanding. When the heart is thus in a right tune and frame, and his word dwells richly in us, there is a kind of immediate perception of what is proper for us to do in present circumstances, without much painful inquiry: a light shines before us upon the path of duty; and, if he permits us in such a spirit to make some mistakes, he will likewise teach us to profit by them, and our reflections upon what was wrong one day will make us to act more wisely the next. At the best we must always expect to meet with new proofs of our own weakness and insufficiency, otherwise how should we be kept humble, or know how to prize the liberty he allows us of coming to the throne of grace for fresh forgiveness and direction every day? But if he enables us to walk before him with a single eye, he will graciously accept our desire of serving him better if we could, and his blessing will make our feeble endeavours in some degree successful, at the same time that we see defects and evils attending our best services, sufficient to make us ashamed of them.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

January 11, 1777.

DEAR SIR,

We all need, and at the seasons the Lord sees best we all receive chastisement. I hope you likewise have reason to praise him, for supporting, sanctifying, and delivering mercy. The coward flesh presently shrinks under the rod, but faith need not fear it, for it is in the hand of one who loves us better than we do ourselves, and who knows our frame, that we are but dust, and therefore will not suffer us to be overdone and overwhelmed.

I feel as a friend should feel for Mr. B——; were I able I would soon send him health. If the Lord, who is able to remove his illness in a minute, permits it to continue, we may be sure, upon the whole, it will be better for him. It is, however, very lawful to pray that his health may be restored and his usefulness prolonged. I beg you to give my love to him, and tell him that my heart bears him an affectionate remembrance; and I know the God whom he serves will make every dispensation supportable and profitable to him.

If, as you observe, the Song of Solomon describes the experience of his church, it shews the dark as well as the bright side. No one part of it is the experience of every individual at any particular time. Some are in his banqueting-house, others upon their beds. Some sit under his banner, supported by his arm, while others have a faint perception of him at a distance, with many a hill and mountain between. In one thing, however, they all agree, that he is the leading object of their desires, and that they have had such a discovery of his person, work, and love, as makes him precious to their hearts. Their judgment of him is always the same, but their sensibi-

lity varies. The love they bear him, though rooted and grounded in their hearts, is not always equal in exercise, nor can it be so. We are like trees, which, though alive, cannot put forth their leaves and fruit without the influence of the sun. They are alive in winter as well as in summer; but how different is their appearance in these different seasons! Were we always alike, could we always believe, love, and rejoice, we should think the power inherent, and our own; but it is more for the Lord's glory, and more suited to form us to a temper becoming the gospel, that we should be made deeply sensible of our own inability and dependence, than that we should be always in a lively frame. I am persuaded a broken and a contrite spirit, a conviction of our vileness and nothingness, connected with a cordial acceptance of Jesus as revealed in the gospel, is the highest attainment we can reach in this life. Sensible comforts are desireable, and we must be sadly declined when they do not appear so to us; but I believe there may be a real exercise of faith and growth in grace, when our sensible feelings are faint and low. A soul may be in as thriving a state, when thirsting, seeking, and mourning after the Lord, as when actually rejoicing in him, as much in earnest when fighting in the valley as when singing upon the mount; nay, dark seasons afford the surest and strongest manifestations of the power of faith. To hold fast the word of promise, to maintain a hatred of sin, to go on steadfastly in the path of duty, in defiance both of the frowns and the smiles of the world, when we have but little comfort, is a more certain evidence of grace than a thousand things which we may do or forbear when our spirits are warm and lively. I have seen many who have been upon the whole but uneven walkers, though at times they seemed to enjoy, at least have talked of great comforts. I have seen others, for the most part, complain of much darkness and coldness, who have been remarkably humble, tender, and exemplary in their spirit and conduct. Surely, were I to chuse my lot, it should be with the latter.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MRS. G——,

LETTER I.

June 20, 1776.

MADAM,

It would be both unkind and ungrateful in me, to avail myself of any plea of business, for delaying the acknowledgment I owe you for your acceptable favour from ——, which, though dated the 6th instant, I did not receive till the 10th.

Could I have known in time that you were at Mr. ——'s, I should have endeavoured to have called upon you while there; and very glad should I have been to have seen you with us. But they who fear the Lord may be sure, that whatever is not practicable is not necessary. He could have over-ruled every difficulty in your way, had he seen it expedient; but he is pleased to shew you, that you depend not upon men, but upon himself: and that, notwithstanding your connections may exclude you from some advantages in point of outward means, he who has begun a good work in you, is able to carry it on, in defiance of all seeming hindrances, and make all things (even those which have the most unfavourable appearances) work together for your good.

A sure effect of his grace, is a desire and longing for gospel-ordinances; and when they are afforded, they cannot be neglected without loss. But the Lord sees many souls who are dear to him, and whom he is training up in a growing meetness for his kingdom, who are by his providence so situated, that it is not in their power to attend upon gospel preaching; and perhaps they have seldom either christian minister or christian friend to assist or comfort them. Such a situation is a state of trial; but Jesus is all-sufficient, and he is always near. They cannot be debarred from his word of grace, which is every where at hand, nor from his throne of grace; for they who feel their need of him, and whose hearts are drawn towards him, are always at the foot of it. Every room in the house, yea, every spot they stand on, fields, lanes, and hedge-rows, all is holy ground to them; for the Lord is there. The chief difference between us, and the disciples when our Saviour was upon earth, is in this: They then walked by sight, and we are called to walk by faith. They could see him with their bodily eyes, we cannot; but he said before he left them, "It is expedient for you that I go away." How could this be, unless that spiritual communion which he promised to maintain with his people after his ascension, were preferable to that intercourse he allowed them whilst he was visibly with them? But we are sure it is preferable, and they who had tried both were well satisfied he had made good his promise; so that though they had known him after the flesh, they were content not to know him so any more. Yes, Madam, though we cannot see him, he sees us; he is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. In a natural state, we have very dark, and indeed dishonourable thoughts of God: we conceive of him as at a distance; but when the heart is awakened, we begin to make Jacob's reflection, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And when we receive faith, we begin to know that this ever present God is in Christ; that the government of heaven and earth, the dispensations of the kingdom of nature, providence, and grace, are in the hands of Jesus, that it is he with whom we have to do, who once suffered agony and death for our redemption, and whose compassion and tenderness are the same, now he reigns over all blessed for ever, as when he conversed amongst men in the days of his humiliation. Thus God is made known to us by the gospel, in the endearing views of a Saviour, a Shepherd, a Husband, a Friend; and a way of access is opened for us through

the vail, that is, the human nature, of our Redeemer, to enter, with humble confidence, into the holiest of all, and to repose all our cares and concerns upon the strength of that everlasting arm which upholds heaven and earth, and upon that infinite love which submitted to the shame, pain, and death of the cross, to redeem sinners from wrath and misery.

Though there is a height, a breadth, a length, and a depth, in this mystery of redeeming love, exceeding the comprehension of all finite minds; yet the great and leading principles which are necessary for the support and comfort of our souls, may be summed up in a very few words. Such a summary we are favoured with in Titus ii. 11—14, where the whole of salvation, all that is needful to be known, experienced, practised, and hoped for, is comprised within the compass of four verses. If many books, much study, and great discernment, were necessary in order to be happy, what must the poor and simple do? Yet for them especially is the gospel designed; and few but such as these attain the knowledge and comfort of it. The Bible is a sealed book till the heart be awakened, and then he that runs may read. The propositions are few: I am a sinner, therefore I need a Saviour, one who is able and willing to save to the uttermost: such a one is Jesus; he is all that I want, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But will he receive me? Can I answer a previous question? Am I willing to receive him? If so, and if his word may be taken, if he meant what he said, and promised no more than he can perform, I may be sure of a welcome. He knew long before, the doubts, fears, and suspicions, which would arise in my mind when I should come to know what I am, what I have done, and what I have deserved; and therefore he declared, before he left the earth, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." I have no money or price in my hand, no worthiness to recommend me; and I need none, for he saveth freely for his own name's sake. I have only to be thankful for what he has already shewn me, and to wait upon him for more. It is my part to commit myself to him as the physician of sin-sick souls, not to prescribe to him how he shall treat me. To begin, carry on, and perfect the cure, is his part.

The doubts and fears you speak of, are, in a greater or less degree, the common experience of all the Lord's people, at least for a time. Whilst any unbelief remains in the heart, and Satan is permitted to tempt, we shall feel these things. In themselves they are groundless and evil; yet the Lord permits and overrules them for good. They tend to make us know more of the plagues of our own hearts, and feel more sensibly the need of a Saviour, and make his rest (when we attain it) doubly sweet and sure. And they likewise qualify us for pitying and comforting others. Fear not; only believe, wait, and pray. Expect not all at once. A christian is not of hasty growth, like a mushroom, but rather like the oak, the progress of which is hardly perceptible, but which in time becomes a great deep-rooted tree. If my writings have been useful to you, may the Lord have the praise. To administer any comfort to his children is the greatest honour and pleasure I can receive in this life. I cannot promise to be a very punctual correspondent, having many engagements; but I hope to do all in my power to shew myself, Madam,

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

August 20, 1776.

MADAM,

THOUGH in general I think myself tolerably punctual when I can answer a letter in six or seven weeks after the receipt, yet I feel some pain for not having acknowledged yours sooner. A case like that which you have favoured me with an account of, deserved an immediate attention, and when I read it, I proposed writing within a post or two, and I can hardly allow any plea of business to be a sufficient excuse for delaying it so long; but our times are in the Lord's hands. May he now enable me to send you what may prove a word in season.

Your exercises have been by no means singular, though they may appear so to yourself; because, in your retired situation, you have not (as you observe) had much opportunity of knowing the experience of other christians; nor has the guilt with which your mind has been so greatly burdened been properly your own. It was a temptation forced upon you by the enemy, and he shall answer for it. Undoubtedly it is a mournful proof of the depravity of our nature, that there is that within us which renders us so easily susceptive of his suggestions; a proof of our extreme weakness, that after the clearest and most satisfying evidences of the truth, we are not able to hold fast our confidence, if the Lord permits Satan to sift and shake us. But I can assure you these changes are not uncommon. I have known persons, who, after walking with God comfortably in the main for forty years, have been at their wits end from such assaults as you mention, and been brought to doubt, not only of the reality of their own hopes, but of the very ground and foundation upon which their hopes were built. Had you remained, as it seems you once were, attached to the vanities of a gay and dissipated life, or could you have been content with a form of godliness, destitute of the power, it is probable you would have remained a stranger to these

troubles. Satan would have employed his arts in a different and less perceptible way, to have soothed you into a false peace, and prevented any thought or suspicion of danger from arising in your mind. But when he could no longer detain you in his bondage, or seduce you back again into the world, then of course he would change his method, and declare open war against you. A specimen of his power and malice you have experienced; and the Lord whom you loved, because he first loved you, permitted it, not to gratify Satan, but for your benefit—to humble and prove you, to shew you what is in your heart, and to do you good in the issue. These things, for the present, are not joyous but grievous; yet, in the end, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. In the mean time his eye is upon you: he has appointed bounds both to the degree and duration of the trial; and he does and will afford you such supports, that you shall not be tried beyond what you are able to bear. I doubt not but your conflicts and sorrows will, in due time, terminate in praise and victory, and be sanctified to your fuller establishment in the truth.

I greatly rejoice in the Lord's goodness to your dying parent. How wisely timed, and how exactly suited, was that affecting dispensation, to break the force of those suggestions with which the enemy was aiming to overwhelm your spirit! He could not stand against such an illustrious demonstrative attestation, that the doctrines you had embraced were not cunningly devised fables. He could proceed no farther in that way; but he is fruitful in resources. His next attempt, of course, was to fix guilt upon your conscience, as if you had yourself formed and willingly entertained those thoughts, which, indeed, you suffered with extreme reluctance and pain. Here likewise I find he succeeded for a time; but he who broke the former snare, will deliver you from this likewise.

The dark and dishonourable thoughts of God, which I hinted at as belonging to a natural state, are very different from the thoughts of your heart concerning him. You do not conceive of him as a hard master, or think you could be more happy in the breach than in the observance of his precepts. You do not prefer the world to his favour, or think you can please him, and make amends for your sins, by an obedience of your own. These, and such as these, are the thoughts of the natural heart,—the very reverse of yours. One thought, however, I confess you have indulged, which is no less dishonourable to the Lord than uncomfortable to yourself. You say, "I dare not believe that God will not impute to me as sin, the admission of thoughts which my soul ever abhorred, and to which my will never consented." Nay, you fear lest they should not only be imputed, but unpardonable. But how can this be possible! Indeed, I will not call it your thought, it is your temptation. You tell me you have children. Then you will easily feel a plain illustration, which just now occurs to me. Let me suppose a case which has sometimes happened; a child, three or four years of age we will say, while playing incautiously at a little distance from home, should be suddenly seized and carried away by a gipsey. Poor thing! how terrified, how distressed must it be! Methinks I hear its cries. The sight and violence of the stranger, the recollection of its dear parents, the loss of its pleasing home, the dread and uncertainty of what is yet to befal it. Is it not a wonder that it does not die in agonies? But see, help is at hand! the gipsey is pursued, and the child recovered. Now, my dear Madam, permit me to ask you, if this were your child, how would you receive it? Perhaps, when the first transports of your joy for its safety would permit you, you might gently chide it for leaving your door. But would you disinherit it? Would you disown it? Would you deliver it up again to the gipsey with your own hands, because it had suffered a violence which it could not withstand, which it abhorred and to which its will never consented? And yet what is the tenderness of a mother, of ten thousand mothers, to that which our compassionate Saviour bears to every poor soul that has been enabled to flee to him for salvation! Let us be far from charging that to him, of which we think we are utterly incapable ourselves. Take courage, Madam; resist the devil and he will flee from you. If he were to tempt you to any thing criminal, you would start at the thought, and renounce it with abhorrence. Do the same when he tempts you to question the Lord's compassion and goodness. But there he imposes upon us with a shew of humility, and persuades us that we do well to oppose our unworthiness as a sufficient exception to the many express promises of the word. It is said, the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin: that all manner of sin shall be forgiven for his sake; that whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast him out; and that he is able to save to the uttermost. Believe his word, and Satan shall be found a liar. If the child had deliberately gone away with the gipsey, had preferred that wretched way of life, and had refused to return, though frequently and tenderly invited home; perhaps a parent's love might, in time, be too weak to plead for the pardon of such continued obstinacy. But, indeed, in this manner we have all dealt with the Lord; and yet, whenever we are willing to return, he is willing to receive us with open arms, and without an upbraiding word, Luke xv. 20, 22. Though our sins have been deep-dyed like scarlet and crimson, enormous as mountains, and countless as the sands, the sum

total is only this, Sin has abounded; but where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. After all, I know the Lord keeps the key of comfort in his own hands, yet he has commanded us to attempt comforting one another. I should rejoice to be his instrument of administering comfort to you. I shall hope to hear from you soon; and that you will then be able to inform me he has restored to you the joys of his salvation. But if not, yet wait for him, and you shall not wait in vain.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

June — 1777.

MY DEAR MADAM,

TEMPTATIONS may be compared to the wind, which, when it has ceased raging from one point, after a short calm, frequently renews its violence from another quarter. The Lord silenced Satan's former assaults against you, but he is permitted to try you again in another way. Be of good courage, Madam, wait upon the Lord, and the present storm shall likewise subside in good time. You have an infallible pilot, and are embarked in a bottom against which the winds and waves cannot prevail. You may be tossed about, and think yourself in apparent jeopardy; but sink you shall not, except the promises and faithfulness of God can fail. Upon an attentive consideration of your complaint, it seems to me to amount only to this, that though the Lord has done great things for you, he has not yet brought you to a state of independence on himself, nor released you from that impossibility which all his people feel, of doing any thing without him. And is this indeed a matter of complaint? Is it not every way better, more for his glory, and more suited to keep us mindful of our obligations to him, and in the event, more for our safety, that we should be reduced to a happy necessity of receiving daily out of his fulness (as the Israelites received the manna), than to be set up with something of a stock of wisdom, power, and goodness of our own? Adam was thus furnished at the beginning with strength to stand; yet, mutability being essential to a creature, he quickly fell and lost all. We, who are by nature sinners, are not left to so hazardous an experiment. He has himself engaged to keep us, and treasured up all fulness of grace for our support in a Head who cannot fail. Our gracious Saviour will communicate all needful supplies to his members, yet in such a manner, that they shall feel their need and weakness, and have nothing to boast of from first to last, but his wisdom, compassion, and care. We are in no worse circumstances than the apostle Paul, who, though eminent and exemplary in the christian life, found, and freely confessed, that he had no sufficiency in himself to think a good thought. Nor did he wish it otherwise; he even gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Unbelief, and a thousand evils, are still in our hearts; though their reign and dominion is at an end, they are not slain or eradicated; their effects will be felt more or less sensibly, as the Lord is pleased more or less to afford or abate his gracious influence. When they are kept down, we are no better in ourselves, for they are not kept down by us: but we are very prone to think better of ourselves at such a time, and therefore, he is pleased to permit us at seasons to feel a difference, that we may never forget how weak and how vile we are. We cannot absolutely conquer these evils, but it becomes us to be humbled for them; and we are to fight, and strive, and pray against them. Our great duty is to be at his footstool, and to cry to him who has promised to perform all things for us. Why are we called soldiers, but because we are called to a warfare. And how could we fight, if there were no enemies to resist? The Lord's soldiers are not merely for shew, to make an empty parade in a uniform, and to brandish their arms when none but friends and spectators are around them. No, we must stand upon the field of battle; we must face the fiery darts; we must wrestle (which is the closest and most arduous kind of fighting) with our foes: nor can we well expect wholly to escape wounds; but the leaves of the tree of life are provided for our healing. The Captain of our salvation is at hand, and leads us on with an assurance, which might make even a coward bold,—that in the end we shall be more than conquerors through him who has loved us.

I am ready to think, that some of the sentiments in your letters are not properly yours, such as you yourself have derived from the scriptures, but rather borrowed from authors or preachers, whose judgment your humility has led you to prefer to your own. At least, I am sure the scriptures do not authorise the conclusion which distresses you, that if you were a child of God, you should not feel such changes and oppositions. Were I to define a christian, or rather to describe him at large, I know no text I would choose sooner, as a ground for the subject, than Gal. v. 17. A christian has noble aims, which distinguish him from the bulk of mankind. His leading principles, motives, and desires, are all supernatural and divine. Could he do as he would, there is not a spirit before the throne should excel him in holiness, love, and obedience. He would tread in the very footsteps of his Saviour, fill up every moment in his service, and employ every breath in his praise. This he would do, but alas! he cannot. Against this

desire of the spirit, there is a contrary desire and working of a corrupt nature, which meets him at every turn. He has a beautiful copy set before him; he is enamoured with it; and though he does not expect to equal it, he writes carefully after it, and longs to attain to the nearest possible imitation. But indwelling sin and Satan continually jog his hand, and spoil his strokes. You cannot, Madam, form a right judgment of yourself, except you make due allowance for those things which are not peculiar to yourself, but common to all who have spiritual perception, and are indeed the inseparable appendages of this mortal state. If it were not so, why should the most spiritual and gracious people be so ready to confess themselves vile and worthless? One eminent branch of our holiness, is a sense of shame and humiliation for those evils which are only known to ourselves, and to him who searches our hearts, joined with an acquiescence in Jesus, who is appointed of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I will venture to assure you, that though you will possess a more stable peace, in proportion as the Lord enables you to live more simply upon the blood, righteousness, and grace of the Mediator, you will never grow into a better opinion of yourself than you have at present. The nearer you are brought to him, the quicker sense you will have of your continual need of him, and thereby your admiration of his power, love, and compassion, will increase likewise from year to year.

I would observe farther, that our spiritual exercises are not a little influenced by our constitutional temperament. As you are only an ideal correspondent, I can but conjecture about you upon this head. If your frame is delicate, and your nervous system very sensible and tender, I should probably ascribe some of your apprehensions to this cause. It is an abstruse subject, and I will not enter into it; but, according to the observations I have made, persons of this habit seem to live more upon the confines of the invisible world, if I may so speak, and to be more susceptive of impressions from it, than others. That complaint, which, for want of a better name, we call lowness of spirits, may probably afford the enemy some peculiar advantages and occasions of distressing you. The mind then perceives objects as through a tinctured medium, which gives them a dark and discouraging appearance; and I believe Satan has more influence and address than we are aware of in managing the glass. And when this is not the case at all times, it may be so occasionally, from sickness, or other circumstances. You tell me that you have lately been ill, which, together with your present situation, and the prospect of your approaching hour, may probably have such an effect as I have hinted. You may be charging yourself with guilt, for what springs from indisposition, in which you are merely passive, and which may be no more properly sinful than the headache, or any of the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to. The enemy can take no advantage but what the Lord permits him; and he will permit him none but what he designs to over-rule for your greater advantage in the end. He delights in your prosperity; and you should not be in heaviness for an hour, were there not a need-be for it. Notwithstanding your fears, I have a good hope, that he who you say has helped you in six troubles, will appear for you in the seventh; that you will not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord, and come forth to testify to his praise, that he has turned your mourning into joy.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MISS F——.

LETTER I.

October 3 1778.

DEAR MADAM,

YOU would have me tell you what are the best means to be used by a young person, to prevent the world, with all its opening and ensnaring scenes, from drawing the heart aside from God. It is an important question: but I apprehend your own heart will tell you, that you are already possessed of all the information concerning it which you can well expect from me. I could only attempt to answer it from the Bible, which lies open to you likewise. If your heart is like mine, it must confess, that when it turns aside from God, it is seldom through ignorance of the proper means or motives which should have kept us near him, but rather from an evil principle within, which prevails against our better judgment, and renders us unfaithful to light already received.

I could offer you rules, cautions, and advices in abundance; for I find it comparatively easy to preach to others. But if you should farther ask me, How you shall effectually reduce them to practice? I feel that I am so deficient, and so much at a loss in this matter myself, that I know not well what to say to you. Yet something must be said.

In the first place, then, I would observe, that though it be our bounden duty, and the highest privilege we can propose to ourselves, to have our hearts kept close to the Lord; yet we must not expect it absolutely or perfectly, much less all at once; we shall keep close to him, in proportion as we are solidly convinced of the infinite disparity between im and the things which would presume to tand in competition with him, and the folly, s well as ingratitude, of departing from him. ut these points are only to be learned by exrience, and by smarting under a series of painful disappointments in our expectations from creatures. Our judgments may be quickly satisfied, that his favour is better than life, while yet it is in the power of a mere trifle to turn us aside. The Lord permits us to feel our weakness, that we may be sensible of it; for though we are ready, in words, to confess that we are weak, we do not so properly know it, till that secret, though unallowed dependence we have upon some strength in ourselves, is brought to the trial, and fails us. To be humble, and like a little child, afraid of taking a step alone, and so conscious of snares and dangers around us, as to cry to him continually to hold us up, that we may be safe, is the sure, the infallible, the only secret of walking closely with him.

But how shall we attain this humble frame of spirit? It must be, as I said, from a real and sensible conviction of our weakness and vileness, which we cannot learn (at least I have not been able to learn it) merely from books or preachers. The providence of God concurs with his Holy Spirit in his merciful design of making us acquainted with ourselves. It is indeed a great mercy to be preserved from such declensions as might fall under the notice of our fellow-creatures; but when they can observe nothing of consequence to object to us, things may be far from right with us in the sight of him who judges not only actions, but the thoughts and first motions of the heart. And indeed, could we for a season so cleave to God, as to find little or nothing in ourselves to be ashamed of, we are such poor creatures, that we should presently grow vain and self-sufficient, and expose ourselves to the greatest danger of falling.

There are, however, means to be observed on our part; and though you know them, I will repeat the principal, because you desire

me. The first is Prayer; and here, above all things, we should pray for humility. It may be called both the guard of all other graces, and the soil in which they grow. The second, Attention to the scriptures. Your question is directly answered in Psalm cxix. 9. The precepts are our rule and delight, the promises our strength and encouragement: the good recorded of the saints is proposed for our encouragement; their miscarriages are as land-marks set up to warn us of the rocks and shoals which lie in the way of our passage. The study of the whole scheme of gospel-salvation, respecting the person, life, doctrine, death and glory of our Redeemer, is appointed to form our souls to a spiritual and divine taste; and so far as this prevails and grows in us, the trifles that would draw us from the Lord will lose their influence, and appear, divested of the glare with which they strike the senses, mere vanity and nothing. The third grand means is, Consideration or Recollection; a careful regard to those temptations and snares, to which, from our tempers, situations, or connections, we are more immediately exposed, and by which we have been formerly hindered. It may be well in the morning, ere we leave our chambers, to forecast, as far as we are able, the probable circumstances of the day before us. Yet the observance of this, as well as of every rule that can be offered, may dwindle into a mere form. However, I trust the Lord, who has given you a desire to live to him, will be your guard and teacher. There is none teacheth like him.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

March — 1779.

DEAR MADAM,

OUR experiences pretty much tally; they may be drawn out into sheets and quires, but the sum-total may be comprised in a short sentence, "Our life is a warfare." For our encouragement, the apostle calls it a good warfare. We are engaged in a good cause, fight under a good Captain, the victory is sure beforehand, and the prize is a crown, a crown of life. Such considerations might make even a coward bold. But then we must be content to fight; and considering the nature, number, situation, and subtilty of our enemies, we may expect sometimes to receive a wound; but there is a medicinal tree, the leaves of which are always at hand to heal us. We cannot be too attentive to the evil which is always working in us, or to the stratagems which are employed against us; yet our attention should not be wholly confined to these things. We are to look upwards likewise to him, who is our head, our life, our strength. One glance of Jesus will convey more effectual assistance than poring upon our own hearts for a month. The one is to be done; but the other should upon no account be omitted. It was not by counting their wounds, but by beholding the brazen serpent, the Lord's instituted means of cure, that the Israelites were healed. That was an emblem for our instruction. One great cause of our frequent conflicts is, that we have a secret desire to be rich, and it is the Lord's design to make us poor: we want to gain an ability of doing something; and he suits his dispensations, to convince us that we can do nothing: we want a stock in ourselves, and he would have us absolutely dependent upon him. So far as we are content to be weak, that his power may be magnified in us, so far we shall make our enemies know that we are strong, though we ourselves shall never be directly sensible that we are so; only by comparing what we are with the opposition we stand against, we may come to a comfortable conclusion, that the Lord worketh mightily in us, Psal. xli. 11.

If our views are simple, and our desires towards the Lord, it may be of use to consider some of your faults and mine, not as the faults of you and me in particular, but as the fault of that depraved nature which is common with us to all the Lord's people, and which made Paul groan as feelingly and as heartily as we can do. But this consideration, though true and scriptural, can only be safely applied when the mind is sincerely and in good earnest devoted to the Lord. There are too many unsound and half professors, who eagerly catch at it as an excuse for those evils they are unwilling to part with. But I trust I may safely recommend it to you. This evil nature, this indwelling sin, is a living principle, an active, powerful cause; and a cause that is active will necessarily produce an effect. Sin is the same thing in believers as in the unregenerate: they have indeed a contrary principle of grace, which counteracts and resists it, which can prevent its outbreakings, but will not suppress its risings. As grace resists sin, so sin resists grace, Gal. v. 17. The proper tendency of each is mutually weakened on both sides; and, between the two, the poor believer, however blameless and exemplary in the sight of men, appears in his own view the most inconsistent character under the sun. He can hardly think it is so with others; and, judging of them by what he sees, and of himself by what he feels, in lowliness of heart he esteems others better than himself. This proves him to be right, for it is the will of God concerning him, Phil. ii. 3. This is the warfare. But it shall not always be so. Grace shall prevail. The evil nature is already enervated, and ere long it will die the death. Jesus will make us more than conquerors. I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REV. DR. ——,

LETTER I.

April 17, 1776.

DEAR SIR,

By this time I hope you are both returned in peace, and happy together in your stated favoured tract; rejoicing in the name of Jesus yourselves, and rejoicing to see the savour of it spreading like a precious perfume among the people. Every day I hope you find prejudices wearing off, and more disposed to hear the words of life. The Lord has given you a fine first-fruits, which I trust will prove the earnest of a plentiful harvest. In the meantime he will enable you to sow the seed in patience, leaving the event in his hands. Though it does not spring up visibly at once, it will not be lost. I think he would not have sent you if he had not a people there to call; but they can only come forth to view as he is pleased to bring them. Satan will try to hinder and disturb you, but he is in a chain which he cannot break, nor go a step farther than he is permitted. And if you have been instrumental to the conversion of but a few, in those few you have an ample reward already for all the difficulties you have or can meet with. It is more honourable and important to be an instrument of saving one soul than to rescue a whole kingdom from temporal ruin. Let us therefore, while we earnestly desire to be more useful, not forget to be thankful for what the Lord has been pleased already to do for us; and let us expect, knowing whose servants we are, and what a gospel we preach, to see some new miracles wrought from day to day, for indeed every real conversion may be accounted miraculous, being no less than an immediate exertion of that power which made the heavens and commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Your little telescope is safe. I wish I had more of that clear air and sunshine you speak of, that with you I might have more distinct views of the land of promise. I cannot say my prospect is greatly clouded by doubts of my reaching it at last; but then there is such a langour and deadness hanging upon my mind, that it is almost amazing to me how I can entertain any hopes at all. It seems, if doubting could ever be reasonable, there is no one who has greater reason for doubting than myself. But I know not how to doubt, when I consider the faithfulness, grace, and compassion of him who has promised. If it could be proved that Christ had not died, or that he did not speak the words which are ascribed to him in the gospel, or that he is not able to make them good, or that his word cannot safely be taken; in any of these cases I should doubt to purpose, and lie down in despair.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

July 15, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR,

I BEGIN with congratulations first to you and Mrs. ——, on your safe journey and good passage over the formidable Humber. Mrs. —— has another river to cross (may it be many years before she approaches the bank) over which there is no bridge. Perhaps at seasons she may think of it with that reluctance which she felt before she saw the Humber; but as

her fears were then agreeably disappointed, and she found the experiment, when called to make it, neither terrifying nor dangerous, so I trust she will find it in the other case. Did not she think, The Lord knows where I shall be, and he will meet me there with a storm, because I am such a sinner? Then how the billows will foam and rage at me, and what a long passage I shall have, and perhaps I shall sink in the middle, and never set my foot in Hull. It is true, I am not so much afraid of the journey I go by land, though I know that every step of the way the horses or the chaise may fall, and I be killed; but how do I know but he may preserve me on the road on purpose to drown me in the river? But behold, when she came to it all was calm, or, what was better, a gentle, fair breeze, to waft her pleasantly over before she was aware. Thus we are apt perversely to reason: he guides and guards me through life; he gives me new mercies, and new proofs of his power and care every day; and therefore, when I come to die, he will forsake me, and let me be the sport of winds and waves. Indeed the Lord does not deserve such hard thoughts at our hands as we are prone to form of him. But notwithstanding we make such returns, he is and will be gracious, and shame us out of our unkind, ungrateful, unbelieving fears at last. If, after my repeated kind reception at your house, I should always be teasing Mrs. —— with suspicions of her good-will, and should tell every body I saw, that I verily believed the next time I went to see her she would shut the door in my face, and refuse me admittance, would she not be grieved, offended, and affronted? Would she not think, What reason can he assign for this treatment? He knows I did every thing in my power to assure him of a welcome, and told him so over and over again. Does he count me a deceiver? Yes he does: I see his friendship is not worth preserving; so, farewell. I will seek friends among such as believe my words and actions. Well, my dear madam, I am clear I always believed you; I make no doubt but you will treat me kindly next time, as you did the last. But pray, is not the Lord as worthy of being trusted as yourself, and are not his invitations and promises as hearty and as honest as yours? Let us therefore beware of giving way to such thoughts of him as we could hardly forgive in our dearest friends, if they should harbour the like of us.

I have heard nothing of Mr. P—— yet, but that he is in town, very busy about that precious piece of furniture called a wife. May the Lord direct and bless his choice. In Captain Cook's voyage to the South Sea, some fish were caught which looked as well as others, but those who ate of them were poisoned: alas for the poor man who catches a poisonous wife! There are such to be met with in the matrimonial seas, that look passing well to the eye, but a connexion with them proves baneful to domestic peace, and hurtful to the life of grace. I know two or three people, perhaps a few more, who have great reason to be thankful to him who sent the fish, with the money in its mouth, to Peter's hook. He secretly instructed and guided us where to angle, and, if we have caught prizes, we owe it not to our own skill, much less to our deserts, but to his goodness.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

September 4, 1776.

MY DEAR SIR,

—— POOR little boy, it is a mercy indeed that he recovered from such a formidable hurt. The Lord wounded, and the Lord healed I ascribe, with you, what the world calls accident to him, and believe that without his permission for wise and good ends, a child can no more pull a bowl of boiling water on itself than it could pull the moon out of her orbit. And why does he permit such things? One reason or two is sufficient for us: it is to remind us of the uncertainty of life and all creature-comforts; to make us afraid of cleaving too close to pretty toys, which are so precarious, that often while we look at them they vanish, and to lead us to a more entire dependence upon himself; that we might never judge ourselves or our concerns safe from outward appearances only, but that the Lord is our keeper, and were not his eye upon us, a thousand dangers and painful changes, which we can neither foresee nor prevent, are lurking about us every step, ready to break in upon us every hour. Men are but children of a larger growth. How many are labouring and planning in the pursuit of things, the event of which, if they obtain them will be but like pulling scalding water upon their own heads. They must have the bowl by all means, but they are not aware what is in it till they feel it.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

July 7, 1777.

SIR,

I HAVE had a letter from your minister since his arrival at ——. I hope he will be restored to you again before long, and that he and many of your place will rejoice long in each other. Those are favoured places which are blessed with a sound and faithful gospel-ministry, if the people know and consider the

value of their privileges, and are really desirous of profiting by them; but the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. I hope those who profess the gospel with you will wrestle in prayer for grace to walk worthy of it. A minister's hands are strengthened, when he can point to his people, as so many living proofs, that the doctrines he preaches are doctrines according to godliness; when they walk in mutual love; when each one, in their several places, manifests an humble, spiritual, and upright, conduct; when they are christians, not only at church, but in the family, the shop, and the field; when they fill up their relations in life, as husbands or wives, masters or servants, parents or children, according to the rule of the word; when they are evidently a people separated from the world while conversant in it, and are careful to let their light shine before men, not only by talking, but by acting as the disciples of Christ, when they go on steadily, not by fits and starts, prizing the means of grace, without resting in them: when it is thus, we can say, Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. Then we come forth with pleasure, and our service is our delight, and we are encouraged to hope for an increasing blessing. But if the people in whom we have rejoiced sink into formality or a worldly spirit: if they have dissentions and jealousies among themselves; if they act improperly, and give the enemies occasion to say, There, there, so would we have it: then our hearts are wounded and our zeal damped, and we know not how to speak with liberty. It is my heart's desire and prayer for you, that whether I see you, or else be absent from you, I may know that you stand fast in one spirit and one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MRS. ——,

LETTER I.

Nov. — 1775.

MY DEAR MADAM,

TOO much of that impatience which you speak of, towards those who differ from us in some religious sentiments, is observable on all sides. I do not consider it as the fault of a few individuals, or of this or that party, so much as the effect of that inherent imperfection which is common to our whole race. Anger and scorn are equally unbecoming in those who profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, and who acknowledge themselves to be both sinful and fallible; but too often something of this leaven will be found cleaving to the best characters, and mixed with honest endeavours to serve the best cause. But thus it was from the beginning; and we have reason to confess that we are no better than the apostles were, who, though they meant well, manifested once and again a wrong spirit in their zeal, Luke ix. 54. Observation and experience contribute, by the grace of God, gradually to soften and sweeten our spirits; but then there will always be ground for mutual forbearance and mutual forgiveness on his head. However, so far as I may judge of myself, I think this hastiness is not my most easily besetting sin. I am not indeed an advocate for that indifference and lukewarmness to the truths of God, which seem to constitute the candour many plead for in the present day. But while I desire to hold fast the sound doctrines of the gospel, towards the persons of my fellow creatures I wish to exercise all moderation and benevolence. Protestants or Papists, Socinians or Deists, Jews, Samaritans, or Mahometans, all are my neighbours, they have all a claim upon me for the common offices of humanity. As to religion, they cannot all be right; nor may I compliment them by allowing the differences between us are but trivial, when I believe and know they are important; but I am not to expect them to see with my eyes. I am deeply convinced of the truth of John Baptist's aphorism, John, iii. 27. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." I well know, that the little measure of knowledge I have obtained in the things of God, has not been owing to my own wisdom and docility, but to his goodness. Nor did I get it all at once; he has been pleased to exercise much patience and long-suffering towards me, for about twenty-seven years past, since he first gave me a desire of learning from himself. He has graciously accommodated himself to my weakness, borne with mistakes, and helped me through innumerable prejudices, which, but for his mercy, would have been insuperable hindrances: I have therefore no right to be angry, impatient, or censorious, especially as I have still much to learn, and am so poorly influenced by what I seem to know. I am weary of controversies and disputes, and desire to chuse for myself, and to point out to others, Mary's part, to sit at Jesus' feet, and to hear his words. And, blessed be his name! so far as I have learned from him, I am favoured with a comfortable certainty: I know whom I have believed, and am no longer tossed about by the various winds and tides of opinions, by which I see many are dashed one against the other. But I cannot, I must not, I dare not contend; only, as a witness for God, I am ready to bear my simple testimony to what I have known of his truth, whenever I am properly called to it.

I agree with you, that some accounted evangelical teachers have too much confined themselves to a few leading and favourite topics. I think this a fault; and believe, when it is

constantly so, the auditories are deprived of much edification and pleasure, which they might receive from a more judicious and comprehensive plan. The whole scripture, as it consists of histories, prophecies, doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, admonitions, encouragements, and reproofs, is the proper subject of the gospel-ministry; and every part should in its place and course be attended to; yet, so as that, in every compartment we exhibit, Jesus should be the capital figure; in whom the prophecies are fulfilled, the promises established; to whom, in a way of type and emblem, the most important parts of scripture history have an express reference; and from whom alone we can receive that life, strength, and encouragement, which are necessary to make obedience either pleasing or practicable. And where there is true spiritual faith in the heart, and in exercise, I believe a person will not so much need a detail of what he is to practice, as to be often greatly at a loss without it. Our Saviour's commandments are plain and clear in themselves; and that love which springs from faith, is the best casuist and commentator to apply and enforce them.

You are pleased to say, "Forgive me if I transgress; I know the place whereon I stand is holy ground." Permit me to assure you, my dear Madam, that were I, which I am not, a person of some importance, you would run no hazard of offending me by controverting any of my sentiments: I hold none (knowingly) which I am not willing to submit to examination; nor am I afraid of offending you by speaking freely, when you point out my way. I should wrong you, if I thought to please you by palliating or disguising the sentiments of my heart; and if I attempted to do so, you would soon see through the design, and despise it. There may perhaps be an improper manner of chiming upon the name of Jesus, and I am not for vindicating any impropriety; yet, could I feel what I ought to mean when I pronounce that name, I should not fear mentioning it too often. I am afraid of no excess in thinking highly of it, because I read it is the will of God that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father. Laboured explications of the Trinity I always avoid. I am afraid of darkening counsel by words without knowledge. Scripture, and even reason, assures me, there is but one God, whose name alone is Jehovah. Scripture likewise assures me that Christ is God, that Jesus is Jehovah. I cannot say that reason assents with equal readiness to this proposition as to the former. But, admitting what the scriptures teach concerning the evil of sin, the depravity of human nature, the method of salvation, and the offices of the Saviour; admitting that God has purposed to glorify, not his mercy only, but his justice, in the work of redemption; that the blood shed upon the cross is a proper, adequate satisfaction for sin; and that the Redeemer is at present the Shepherd of those who believe in him, and will hereafter be the Judge of the world; that, in order to give the effectual help which we need, it is necessary that he be always intimately with those who depend upon him, in every age, in every place; must know the thoughts and intents of every heart; must have his eye always upon them, his ear always open to them, his arm ever stretched out for their relief; that they can receive nothing but what he bestows, can do nothing but as he enables them, nor stand a moment but as he upholds them: admitting these and the like promises, with which the word of God abounds, reason must allow, whatever difficulties may attend the thought, that only he who is God over all, blessed for ever, is able or worthy to execute this complicated plan, every part of which requires the exertion of infinite wisdom and almighty power; nor am I able to form any clear, satisfactory, or comfortable thoughts of God, suited to awaken my love or engage my trust, but as he has been pleased to reveal himself in the person of Jesus Christ. I believe, with the apostle, that God was once manifested in the flesh upon earth, and that he is now manifested in the flesh in heaven; and that the worship, not only of redeemed sinners, but of the holy angels, is addressed to the Lamb that was slain, and who, in that nature in which he suffered, now exercises universal dominion, and has the government of heaven, earth, and hell upon his shoulders. This truth is the foundation upon which my hope is built, the fountain from whence I derive all my strength and consolation, and my only encouragement for venturing to the throne of grace, for grace to help in time of need.

Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three,
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.

I am, however, free to confess to you, that, through the pride and unbelief remaining in my heart, and the power of Satan's temptations, there are seasons when I find no small perplexity and evil reasonings upon this high point; but it is so absolutely essential to my peace that I cannot part with it, for I cannot give it up without giving up all hope of salvation on the one hand, and giving up the Bible, as an unmeaning, contradictory fable, on the other; and, through mercy, for the most part, when I am in my right mind, I am as fully persuaded of this truth as I am of my own existence; but, from the exercises I have had about it, I have learned to subscribe to the apostle's declaration, that "no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the

Holy Ghost." I am well satisfied it will not be a burden to me at the hour of death, nor be laid to my charge at the day of judgment, that I have thought too highly of Jesus, expected too much from him myself, or laboured too much in commending and setting him forth to others as the Alpha and Omega, the true God and eternal life. On the contrary, alas! alas! my guilt and grief are, that my thoughts of him are so faint, so infrequent, and my commendations of him so lamentably cold and disproportionate to what they ought to be.

I know not whose letters are rapturous, but I wish mine were more so; not that I am a friend to ungrounded sallies of imagination, flights of animal passions, or heat without light. But it would be amazing to me, were I not aware of human depravity, of which I consider this as one of the most striking proofs, that they who have any good hope of an interest in the gospel salvation do not find their hearts (as Dr. Watts expresses it) all on fire, and that their very looks do not express a transport of admiration, gratitude, and love, when they consider from what misery they are redeemed, to what happiness they are called, and what a price was paid for their souls. I wish to be more like the apostle Paul in this respect, who, though he often forms and compounds new words, seems at a loss for any that could suitably describe the emotions of his heart. But I am persuaded you would not object to the just fervour of scriptural devotion. But this holy flame can seldom be found unsullied in the present life. The temper, constitution, and infirmities of individuals will mix more or less with what they say or do. Allowances must be made for such things in the present state of infirmity, for who can hope to be perfectly free from them? If the heart is right with God, and sincerely affected with the wonders of redeeming love, our gracious High-Priest, who knows our weakness, pities and pardons what is amiss, accepts our poor efforts, and gradually teaches us to discern and avoid what is blameable. The work of grace, in its first stages, I sometimes compare to the lighting of a fire, where for a while there is abundance of smoke, but by and by it burns clearer and clearer. There is often, both in letters and books, what might be very well omitted; but if a love to God and souls be the leading principle, I pass as gentle censure upon the rest as I can, and apply to some eccentric expressions, what Mr. Prior somewhere says of our civil dissensions in this land of liberty,

A bad effect, but from a noble cause.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

February 16, 1776.

MY DEAR MADAM,

It gave me great comfort to find, that what I wrote concerning the divine character of Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh, met with your approbation. This doctrine is, in my view, the great foundation-stone upon which all true religion is built; but, alas! in the present day, it is the stumbling-stone and rock of offence, upon which too many, fondly presuming upon their own wisdom, fall and are broken. I am so far from wondering that any should doubt of it, that I am firmly persuaded none can truly believe it, however plainly set forth in scripture, unless it be revealed to them from heaven, or, in the apostle's words, that "no one can call Jesus Christ Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." I believe there are many who think they believe it, because they have taken it for granted, and never attentively considered the difficulties with which it is attended in the eye of fallen reason. Judging by natural light, it seems impossible to believe that the title of the true God and eternal life should properly belong to that despised man who hung dead upon the cross, exposed to the insults of his cruel enemies. I know nothing that can obviate the objections the reasoning mind is ready to form against it, but a real conviction of the sinfulness of sin, and the state of a sinner as exposed to the curse of the holy law, and destitute of every plea and hope in himself. Then the necessity of a Redeemer, and the necessity of this Redeemer's being almighty, is seen and felt, with an evidence which bears down all opposition; for neither the efficacy of his atonement and intercession, nor his sufficiency to guide, save, protect, and feed those who trust in him, can be conceived of without it. When the eyes of the understanding are opened, the soul made acquainted with and attentive to its own state and wants, he that runs may read this truth, not in a few detached texts of a dubious import, and liable to be twisted and tortured by the arts of criticism, but as interwoven in the very frame and texture of the Bible, and written, as with a sun-beam, throughout the principal parts both of the Old and New Testament. If Christ be the shepherd and the husband of his people under the gospel, and if his coming into the world did not abridge those who feared God of the privileges they were entitled to before his appearance, it follows, by undeniable consequence, "that he is God over all, blessed for ever." For David tells us, that his shepherd was Jehovah; and the husband of the Old Testament church was the Maker and God of the whole earth, the Holy One of Israel, whose name is the Lord

of Hosts, Psalm xxiii. 1; Is. liv. 8, with xlvii. 4. I agree with you, Madam, that among the many attempts which have been made to prove and illustrate the scripture doctrine, that the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, are one God, there have been many injudicious, unwarrantable things advanced, which have perplexed, instead of instructing, and of which the enemies of the truth have known how to make their advantage. However, there have been tracts upon these sublime subjects, which have been written with judgment and an unction, and, I believe, attended with a blessing. I seem to prefer Mr. Jones's book on the Trinity to any I have seen, because he does little more than state some of the scripture evidence for it, and draws his inferences briefly and plainly; though even he has admitted a few texts, which may, perhaps, be thought not quite full to the point; and he has certainly omitted several of the most express and strongest testimonies. The best and happiest proof of all, that this doctrine is true in itself, and true to us, is the experience of its effects. They who know his name will put their trust in him: they who are rightly impressed with his astonishing condescension and love, in emptying himself, and submitting to the death of the cross for our sakes, will find themselves under a sweet constraint to love him again, and will feel a little of that emotion of heart which the apostle expresses in that lively passage, Gal. vi. 14. The knowledge of Christ crucified, like Ithuriel's spear, removes the false appearances by which we have been too long cheated, and shews us the men and the things, the spirit, customs, and maxims of the world, in their just light. Were I perfectly master of myself and my subject, I would never adduce any text in proof of a doctrine or assertion from the pulpit, which was not direct and conclusive; because, if a text is pressed into an argument to which it has no proper relation, it rather encumbers than supports it, and raises a suspicion that the cause is weak, and better testimonies in its favour cannot be obtained. Some misapplications of this kind have been so long in use, that they pass pretty current, though, if brought to the assay, they would be found not quite sterling: but I endeavour to avoid them to the best of my judgment. Thus, for instance, I have often heard (Rom. xiv. 23), "Whatever is not of faith is sin," quoted to prove, that without a principle of saving faith, we can perform nothing acceptable to God: whereas it seems clear from the context, that faith is there used in another sense, and signifies a firm persuasion of mind respecting the lawfulness of the action. However, I doubt not but the proposition in itself is strictly true in the other sense, if considered detached from the connexion in which it stands; but I should rather chuse to prove it from other passages, where it is directly affirmed, as Heb. xi. 6; Matth. xii. 33. In such cases, I think hearers should be careful not to be prejudiced against a doctrine, merely because it is not well supported; for perhaps it is capable of solid proof, though the preacher was not so happy as to hit upon that which was most suitable; and extempore preachers may sometimes hope for a little allowance upon this head from the more candid part of their auditory, and not be made offenders for an inadvertence, which they cannot perhaps always avoid in the hurry of speaking. With respect to the application of some passages in the Old Testament to our Lord and Saviour, I hold it safest to keep close to the specimens the apostles have given us, and I would venture with caution, if I go beyond their line; yet it is probable they have only given us a specimen; and that there are a great number of passages which have a direct reference to gospel-truths, though we may run some hazard in making out the allusion. If St. Paul had not gone before me, I should have hesitated to assert, that the prohibition, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," was given, not upon the account of oxen, but altogether for our sakes: nor should I, without his assistance, have found out that the history of Sarah and Hagar was a designed allegory, to set forth the difference between the law and gospel covenants. Therefore, when I hear ministers tracing some other allusions, I cannot be always sure that they push them too far, though perhaps they are not quite satisfactory to my judgment; for it may be, they have a farther insight into the meaning of these places than myself. And I think scriptures may be sometimes used to advantage, by way of accommodation, in popular discourses, and in something of a different sense from what they bear in the place where they stand, provided they are not alleged as proofs, but only to illustrate a truth already proved or acknowledged. Though Job's friends and Job himself were mistaken, there are many great truths in their speeches, which, as such, may, I think, stand as the foundation of a discourse. Nay, I either have, or have often intended, to borrow a truth even from the mouth of Satan, "Hast thou not set a hedge about him?" Such a confession extorted from our grand adversary placing the safety of the Lord's people, under his providential care, in a very striking light.

I perfectly agree with you, Madam, that our religious sensations and exercises are much influenced and tinctured by natural constitution; and that, therefore, tears and warm emotions on the one hand, or a comparative dryness of spirit on the other, are no sure indications of the real state of the heart. Appearances may agree in different persons, or vary in the same person, from causes merely natural: even a change of weather may have some in-

fluence in raising or depressing the spirits, where the nerves are very delicate; and I think such persons are more susceptive of impressions from the agency of invisible powers, both good and evil; an agency which, though we cannot explain, experience will not permit us to deny. However, though circumstantials rise and fall, the real difference between nature and grace remains unalterable. That work of God upon the heart, which is sometimes called a new birth, at others a new creation, is as distant from the highest effects of natural principles, or the most specious imitations which education or resolutions can produce, as light is from darkness, or life from death. Only he who made the world can either make a christian, or support and carry on his own work. A thirst after God as our portion, a delight in Jesus, as the only way and door; a renunciation of self and of the world, so far as it is opposite to the spirit of the gospel: these, and the like fruits of that grace which bringeth salvation, are not only beyond the power of our fallen nature, but contrary to its tendency; so that we can have no desires of this kind till they are given us from above, and can for a season hardly bear to hear them spoken of, either as excellent or necessary.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

September 17, 1776.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WE are much indebted to you for your kind thoughts of us. Hitherto I feel no uneasiness about what is before me; but I am afraid my tranquillity does not wholly spring from trust in the Lord, and submission to his will, but that a part of it at least is derived from the assurances Mr W. gave me, that the operation would be neither difficult nor dangerous. I have not much of the hero in my constitution: if in great pains or sharp trials I should ever shew a becoming fortitude, it must be given me from above. I desire to leave all with him, in whose hands my ways are, and who has promised me strength according to my day.

I rejoice that the Lord has not only made you desirous of being useful to others in their spiritual concerns, but has given you, in some instances, to see that your desires and attempts have not been in vain. I shall thankfully accept of the commission you are pleased to offer me, and take a pleasure in perusing any papers you may think proper to put into my hands, and offer you my sentiments with that simplicity which I am persuaded will be much more agreeable to you than compliments. Though I know there is in general a delicacy and difficulty in services of this kind, yet, with respect to yourself, I seem to have nothing to fear.

I have often wished we had more female pens employed in the service of the sanctuary Though few ladies encumber themselves with the apparatus of Latin or Greek, or engage in voluminous performances, yet, in the article of essay-writing, I think many are qualified to succeed better than most men, having a peculiar easiness of style, which few of us can imitate. I remember you once shewed me a paper, together with the corrections and alterations proposed by a gentleman whose opinion you had asked. I thought his corrections had injured it, and given it an air of stiffness, which is often observable when learned men write in English. Grammatical rules, as they are called, are wholly derived from the mode of speaking or writing which obtains amongst those who best understand the language, for the language must be supposed established before any grammar can be made for it; and therefore women, who, from the course of their education and life, have had an opportunity of reading the best-written books, and conversing with those who speak well, though they do not burden themselves with the formality of grammar, have often more skill in the English language than the men who can call every figure of speech by a Latin or Greek name. You may be sure, Madam, I shall not wish your papers suppressed, merely because they were not written by a learned man. Language and style, however, are but the dress. Trifles, however adorned, are trifles still. A person of spiritual discernment would rather be the author of one page written in the humble garb of Bunyan, upon a serious subject, than to be able to rival the sprightliness and elegance of Lady M. W. Montague, unless it could be with a view to edification. The subjects you propose are important; and, with respect to sacramental meditations, and all devotional exercises so called, I perfectly agree with you, that, to be affecting and useful, they must be dictated rather by the heart than by the head, and are most likely to influence others when they are the fruits and transcripts of our own experience. So far as I know, we are but scantily provided with specimens of this sort in print, and therefore I shall be glad to see an accession to the public stock. Your other thought of helps to recollection on Saturday evenings is, I think, an attempt in which none have been beforehand with you. So that, according to the general appearance, I feel myself disposed to encourage you to do as you have purposed. On the other hand, if I meet with any thing, on the perusal of the papers, which in my view may seem to need alteration, I will freely and faithfully point it out.

I can almost smile now, to think you once classed me amongst the Stoics. If I dare speak with confidence of myself in any thing,

I think I may lay claim to a little of that pleasing, painful thing, sensibility. I need not boast of it, for it has too often been my snare, my sin, and my punishment. Yet I would be thankful for a spice of it, as the Lord's gift, and when rightly exercised, it is valuable; and I think I should make but an awkward minister without it, especially here. Where there is this sensibility in the natural temper, it will give a tincture or cast to our religious expression. Indeed I often find this sensibility weakest where it should be strongest, and have reason to reproach myself that I am not more affected by the character, love, and sufferings of my Lord and Saviour, and my own peculiar personal obligations to him. However, my views of religion have been such for many years, as I supposed more likely to make me be deemed an enthusiast than a Stoic. A moonlight head-knowledge derived from a system of sentiments, however true in themselves, is in my judgment a poor thing; nor, on the other hand, am I an admirer of those rapturous sallies, which are more owing to a warm imagination than to a just perception of the power and importance of gospel-truth. The gospel addresses both head and heart; and, where it has its proper effect, whose it is received as the word of God, and is clothed with the authority and energy of the Holy Spirit, the understanding is enlightened, the affections awakened and engaged, the will brought into subjection, and the whole soul delivered to its impression, as wax to the seal. When this is the case, when the affections do not take the lead, and push forward with a blind impulse, but arise from the principles of scripture, and are governed by them, the more warmth the better. Yet in this state of infirmity nothing is perfect, and our natural temperament and disposition will have more influence upon our religious sensations than we are ordinarily aware. It is well to know how to make proper allowances and abatements upon this head, in the judgment we form both of ourselves and of others. Many good people are distressed and alternately elated by frames and feelings, which perhaps are more constitutional than properly religious experiences. I dare not tell you, Madam, what I am, but I can tell you what I wish to be. The love of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, is what I would wish to be the abiding object of my contemplation; not merely to speculate upon it as a doctrine, but so to feel it, and my own interest in it, as to have my heart filled with its effects, and transformed into its resemblance; that with this glorious exemplar in my view, I may be animated to a spirit of benevolence, love and compassion to all around me; that my love may be primarily fixed upon him who has so loved me, and then, for his sake, diffused to all his children, and to all his creatures. Then, knowing that much is forgiven to me, I should be prompted to the ready exercise of forgiveness, if I have aught against any. Then I should be humble, patient, and submissive under all his dispensations, meek, gentle, forbearing, and kind to my fellow-worms. Then I should be active and diligent in improving all my talents and powers in his service, and for his glory, and live not to myself, but to him who loved me, and gave himself for me.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

November 29, 1776.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I AM persuaded you need not be told, that though there are perhaps supposeable extremities, in which self would prevail over all considerations, yet in general it is more easy to suffer in our own persons than in the persons of those whom we dearly love; for through such a medium our apprehensions possibly receive the idea of the trouble enlarged beyond its just dimensions, and it would sit lighter upon us if it were properly our own case, for then we should feel it all, and there would be no room for imagination to exaggerate.

But though I feel grief, I trust the Lord has mercifully preserved me from impatience and murmuring, and that, in the midst of all the pleadings of flesh and blood, there is a something within me that aims to say, without reserve or exception, "Not my will, but thine be done."

It is a comfortable consideration, that he with whom we have to do, our great High-Priest, who once put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, and now for ever appears in the presence of God for us, is not only possessed of sovereign authority and infinite power, but wears our very nature, and feels and exercises in the highest degree those tendernesses and commiserations which I conceive are essential to humanity in its perfect state. The whole history of his wonderful life is full of inimitable instances of this kind. His bowels were moved before his arm was exerted: he condescended to mingle tears with mourners, and wept over distresses which he intended to relieve. He is still the same in his exalted state: compassions dwell within his heart. In a way inconceivable to us, but consistent with his supreme dignity and perfection of happiness and glory, he still feels for his people. When Saul persecuted the members upon earth, the Head complained from heaven; and sooner shall the most tender mother sit insensible and inattentive to the cries and wants of her infant, than the Lord Jesus be an unconcerned spectator of his suffering children. No! with the eye, and the ear, and the heart of a friend, he attends to their sorrows; he counts their

sighs, puts their tears in his bottle; and, when our spirits are overwhelmed within us, he knows our path, and adjusts the time, the measure of our trials, and every thing that is necessary for our present support and seasonable deliverance, with the same unerring wisdom and accuracy as he weighed the mountains in scales, and hills in a balance, and meted out the heavens with a span. Still more, besides his benevolent, he has an experimental sympathy. He knows our sorrows, not merely as he knows all things, but as one who has been in our situation, and who, though without sin himself, endured, when upon earth, inexpressibly more for us than he will ever lay upon us. He has sanctified poverty, pain, disgrace, temptation and death, by passing through these states; and, in whatever states his people are, they may by faith have fellowship with him in their sufferings, and he will, by sympathy and love, have fellowship and interest with them in theirs. What, then, shall we fear, or of what shall we complain, when all our concerns are written upon his heart, and their management, to the very hairs of our head, are under his care and providence; when he pities us more than we can do ourselves, and has engaged his almighty power to sustain and relieve us. However, as he is tender, he is wise also; he loves us, but especially with regard to our best interests. If there were not something in our hearts and our situation that required discipline and medicine, he so delights in our prosperity that we should never be in heaviness. The innumerable comforts and mercies with which he enriches even those we call our darker days, are sufficient proofs that he does not willingly grieve us; but when he sees a need-be for chastisement, he will not with-hold it because he loves us; on the contrary, that is the very reason why he afflicts. He will put his silver into the fire to purify it; but he sits by the furnace as a refiner, to direct the process, and to secure the end he has in view, that we may neither suffer too much, nor suffer in vain.

I am, &c.

LETTER V

December —, 1776.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE often preached to others of the benefit of affliction, but my own path for many years has been so smooth, and my trials, though I have not been without trials, comparatively so light and few, that I have seemed to myself to speak by rote upon a subject of which I had not a proper feeling. Yet the many exercises of my poor afflicted people, and the sympathy the Lord has given me with them in their troubles, has made this a frequent and favourite topic of my ministry among them. The advantages of afflictions, when the Lord is pleased to employ them for the good of his people, are many and great. Permit me to mention a few of them, and the Lord grant that we may all find those blessed ends answered to ourselves, by the trials he is pleased to appoint us.

Afflictions quicken us to prayer. It is a pity it should be so. Experience, however, testifies that a long course of ease and prosperity, without painful changes, has an unhappy tendency to make us cold and formal in our secret worship, but troubles rouse our spirits, and constrain us to call upon the Lord in good earnest, when we feel a need of that help which we only can have from him.

They are useful, and in a degree necessary, to keep alive in us a conviction of the vanity and unsatisfying nature of the present world and all its enjoyments, to remind us that this is not our rest, and to call our thoughts upwards, where our true treasure is, and where our conversation ought to be. When things go on much to our wish, our hearts are too prone to say, "It is good to be here." It is probable, that had Moses, when he came to invite Israel to Canaan found them in prosperity, as in the days of Joseph, they would have been very unwilling to remove; but the afflictions they were previously brought into made his message welcome. Thus the Lord, by pain, sickness, and disappointments, by breaking our cisterns, and withering our gourds, weakens our attachment to this world, and makes the thought of quitting it more familiar and more desirable.

A child of God cannot but greatly desire a more enlarged and experimental acquaintance with his holy word, and this attainment is greatly promoted by our trials. The far greater part of the promises in scripture are made and suited to a state of affliction; and though we may believe they are true, we cannot so well know their sweetness, power, and suitableness, unless we ourselves are in a state to which they refer. The Lord says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver." Now till the day of trouble comes, such a promise is like a city of refuge to an Israelite, who, not having slain a man, was in no danger of the avenger of blood. He had a privilege near him, of which he knew not the use and value, because he was not in the case for which it was provided. But some can say, I not only believe this promise upon the authority of the speaker, but I can set my seal to it; I have been in trouble; I took this course for relief, and I was not disappointed. The Lord verily heard and delivered me. Thus afflictions likewise give occasion of our knowing and noticing more

of the Lord's wisdom, power, and goodness, in supporting and relieving, than we should otherwise have known.

I have not time to take another sheet, and must therefore contract my homily. Afflictions for evidence to ourselves, and manifest to others, the reality of grace. And when we suffer as christians, exercise some measure of that patience and submission, and receive some measure of these supports and supplies, which the gospel requires and promises to believers, we are more confirmed that we have not taken up with mere notions; and others may be convinced, that we do not follow cunningly devised fables. They likewise strengthen by exercise our graces. As our limbs and natural powers would be feeble if not called to daily exertion; so the graces of the Spirit would languish, unless something was provided to draw them out to use. And, to say no more, they are honourable as they advance our conformity to Jesus our Lord, who was a man of sorrows for our sakes. Methinks, if we might go to heaven without suffering, we should be unwilling to desire it. Why should we ever wish to go by any other path than that which he has consecrated and endeared by his own example? especially as his people's sufferings are not penal; there is no wrath in them; the cup he puts in their hands is very different from that which he drank for their sakes, and is only medicinal to promote their chief good. Here I must stop; but the subject is fruitful, and might be pursued through a quire of paper.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

August — 1778.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOUR obliging favour of the 22d from B ——, which I received last night, demands an immediate acknowledgement. Many things which would have offered by way of answer, must for the present be postponed; for the same post brought an information which turns my thoughts to one subject. What shall I say? Topics of consolation are at hand in abundance; they are familiar to your mind; and were I to fill the sheet with them I could suggest nothing but what you already know. Then are they consolatory indeed, when the Lord himself is pleased to apply them to the heart. This he has promised, and therefore, we are encouraged to expect it. This is my prayer for you: I sincerely sympathize with you; I cannot comfort you; but he can; and I trust he will. How impertinent would it be to advise you to forget or suspend the feelings which such a stroke must excite! Who can help feeling! nor is sensibility in itself

 Christian resignation is very different from that stoical stubbornness, which is most easily practised by those unamiable characters whose regards centre wholly in self; nor could we in a proper manner exercise submission to the will of God under our trials, if we did not feel them. He who knows our frame is pleased to allow, that afflictions for the present are not joyous, but grievous. But to them that fear him he is near at hand, to support their spirits, to moderate their grief, and in the issue to sanctify it; so that they shall come out of the furnace refined, more humble, and more spiritual. There is, however, a part assigned us; we are to pray for the help in need; and we are not wilfully to give way to the impression of overwhelming sorrow. We are to endeavour to turn our thoughts to such considerations as are suited to alleviate it; our deserts as sinners, the many mercies we are still indulged with, the still greater afflictions which many of our fellow-creatures endure, and, above all, the sufferings of Jesus, that man of sorrows, who made himself intimately acquainted with grief for our sakes.

When the will of the Lord is manifested to us by the event, we are to look to him for grace and strength, and to be still and know that he is God, that he has a right to dispose of us and ours as he pleases, and that in the exercise of this right he is most certainly good and wise. We often complain of losses; but the expression is rather improper. Strictly speaking, we can lose nothing, because we have no real property in any thing. Our earthly comforts are lent us, and when recalled, we ought to return and resign them with thankfulness to him who has let them remain so long in our hands. But, as I said above, I do not mean to enlarge in this strain; I hope the Lord, the only Comforter will bring such thoughts with warmth and efficacy upon your mind. Your wound, while fresh, is painful; but faith, prayer, and time, will, I trust, gradually render it tolerable. There is something fascinating in grief: painful as it is, we are prone to indulge it, and to brood over the thoughts and circumstances which are suited (like fuel to fire) to heighten and prolong it. When the Lord afflicts, it is his design that we should grieve; but in this, as in all other things, there is a certain moderation which becomes a christian, and which only grace can teach; and grace teaches us, not by books or by hearsay, but by experimental lessons: all beyond this should be avoided and guarded against as sinful and hurtful. Grief, when indulged and excessive, preys upon the spirits, injures health, indisposes us for duty, and causes us to shed tears which deserve more tears. This is a weeping world. Sin has filled it with thorns and briars, with crosses and calamities. It is a great hospital, resounding with groans in every quarter. It is as a field of battle

where many are falling around us continually: and it is more wonderful that we escape so well, than that we are sometimes wounded. We must have some share; it is the unavoidable lot of our nature and state. It is likewise needful in point of discipline: the Lord will certainly chasten those whom he loves, though others may seem to pass for a time with impunity. That is a sweet, instructive, and important passage, Heb. xii. 5, 11. It is so plain, that it needs no comment; so full, that a comment would but weaken it. May the Lord inscribe it upon your heart, my dear Madam, and upon mine.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

November — 1778.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOUR obliging favour raised in me a variety of emotions when I first received it, and has revived them this morning while perusing it again. I have mourned and rejoiced with you, and felt pain and pleasure in succession, as you diversified the subject. However, the weight of your grief I was willing to consider as a thing that is past; and the thought that you had been mercifully supported under it, and brought through it, that you were restored home in safety, and that at the time of writing you were tolerably well and composed, made joy upon the whole preponderate; and I am more disposed to congratulate you, and join you in praising the Lord for the mercies you enumerate, than to prolong my condolence upon the mournful parts of your letter. Repeated trying occasions have made me well acquainted with the anxious inquiries with which the busy poring mind is apt to pursue departed friends. It can hardly be otherwise under some circumstances. I have found prayer the best relief. I have thought it very allowable to avail myself to the utmost of every favourable consideration; but I have had the most comfort, when I have been enabled to resign the whole concern into his hands, whose thoughts and ways, whose power and goodness, are infinitely superior to our conceptions. I consider, in such cases, that the great Redeemer can save to the uttermost, and the great teacher can communicate light, and impress truth, when and how he pleases. I trust the power of his grace and compassion will hereafter triumphantly appear, in many instances, of persons, who, on their dying beds, and in their last moments, have been, by his mercy, constrained to feel the importance and reality of truths, which they did not properly understand and attend to in the hour of health and prosperity. Such a salutary change I have frequently, or at least more than once, twice, or thrice, been an eye-witness to, accompanied with such evidence as, I think, has been quite satisfactory. And who can say such a change may not often take place, when the person who is the subject of it is too much enfeebled to give an account to by-standers of what is transacting in his mind! Thus I have encouraged my hope. But the best satisfaction of all is, to be duly impressed with the voice that says, "Be still, and know that I am God." These words direct us, not only to his sovereignty, his undoubted right to do what he *will* with his own, but to all his adorable and amiable perfections, by which he has manifested himself to us in the Son of his love.

As I am not a Sadducee: the account you give of the music which entertained you on the road does not put my dependence either upon your veracity or your judgment to any trial. We live upon the confines of the invisible world, or rather perhaps in the midst of it. That unseen agents have a power of operating upon our minds, at least upon that mysterious faculty we call the imagination, is with me not merely a point of opinion, or even of faith, but of experience. That evil spirits can, when permitted, disturb, distress, and defile us, I know, as well as I know that the fire can burn me. And though their interposition is perhaps more easily and certainly distinguishable, yet, from analogy, I conclude that good spirits are equally willing, and equally able, to employ their kind offices for our relief and comfort. I have formed in my mind a kind of system upon this subject, which, for the most part, I keep pretty much to myself; but I can entrust my thoughts to you as they occasionally offer. I apprehend that some persons (those particularly who rank under the class of nervous) are more open and accessible to these impressions than others, and probably the same person more so at some times than others. And though we frequently distinguish between imaginary and real (which is one reason why nervous people are so seldom pitied), yet an impression upon the imagination may, as to the agent that produces it, and to the person that receives it, be as much a reality as any of the sensible objects around him; though a bye-stander, not being able to share in the perception, may account it a mere whim, and suppose it might be avoided or removed by an act of the will. Nor have any a right to with-hold their assent to what the scriptures teach, and many sober persons declare, of this invisible agency, merely because we cannot answer the questions, How? or Why? The thing may be certain, though we cannot easily explain it; and there may be just and important reasons for it, though we should not be able to assign them. If what you heard, or which, in my view, is much the same, what you thought you heard, had a tendency to compose your spirit, and to encourage your application to the Lord for help, a

the time when you were about to stand in need of especial assistance, then there is a sufficient and suitable reason assigned for it at once, without looking any farther. It would be dangerous to make impressions a rule of duty; but if they strengthen us, and assist us in the performance of what we know to be our duty, we may be thankful for them.

You have taken leave of your favourite trees, and the scenes of your younger life, but a few years sooner than you must have done, if the late dispensation had not taken place. All must be left soon; for all below is polluted, and, in its best state, is too scanty to afford us happiness. If we are believers in Jesus, all we can quit is a mere nothing, compared with what we shall obtain. To exchange a dungeon for a palace, earth for heaven, will call for no self-denial when we stand upon the threshold of eternity, and shall have a clearer view than we have now of the vanity of what is passing from us, and the glory of what is before us. The partial changes we meet with in our way through life are designed to remind us of, and prepare us for, the great change which awaits us at the end of it. The Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that solemn hour.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MRS. T———.

LETTER I.

March 12, 1774.

MY DEAR MADAM,

My heart is full, yet I must restrain it. Many thoughts which crowd my mind, and would have vent, were I writing to another person, would to you be unseasonable. I write, not to remind you of what you have lost, but of what you have, which you cannot lose. May the Lord put a word into my heart that may be acceptable, and may his good Spirit accompany the perusal, and enable you to say, with the apostle, that as sufferings abound, consolations also abound by Jesus Christ. Indeed, I can sympathise with you. I remember, too, the delicacy of your frame, and the tenderness of your natural spirits; so that, were you not interested in the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, I should be ready to fear you must sink under your trial. But I have some faint conceptions of the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of the Lord, and may address you in the king's words to Daniel, "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee:" Motives for resignation to his will abound in his word; but it is an additional and crowning mercy, that he has promised to apply and enforce them in time of need. He has said, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee;" and "as thy day is, so shall thy strength be." This, I trust, you have already experienced. The Lord is so rich and so good, that he can, by a glance of thought, compensate his children for whatever his wisdom sees fit to deprive them of. If he gives them a lively sense of what he has delivered them from, and prepared for them, or of what he himself submitted to endure for their sakes, they find at once light springing up out of darkness, hard things become easy, and bitter sweet. I remember to have read of a good man in the last century (probably you may have met with the story), who, when his beloved and only son lay ill, was for some time greatly anxious about the event. One morning he staid longer than usual in his closet; while he was there, his son died. When he came out, his family were afraid to tell him, but, like David, he perceived it by their looks, and when, upon inquiry, they said it was so, he received the news with a composure that surprised them. But he soon explained the reason, by telling them, that for such discoveries of the Lord's goodness as he had been favoured with that morning, he could be content to lose a son every day. Yes, Madam, though every stream must fail, the fountain is still full, and still flowing. All the comfort you ever received in your dear friend was from the Lord, who is abundantly able to comfort you still; and he is gone but a little before you. May your faith anticipate the joyful and glorious meeting you will shortly have in a better world. Then your worship and converse together will be to unspeakable advantage, without imperfection, interruption, abatement, or end. Then all tears shall be wiped away, and every cloud removed; and then you will see, that all your concernments here below (the late afflicting dispensation not excepted), were appointed and adjusted by infinite wisdom and infinite love.

The Lord, who knows our frame, does not expect or require that we should aim at a stoical indifference under his visitations. He allows, that afflictions are at present not joyous, but grievous; yea, he was pleased, when upon earth, to weep with his mourning friends when Lazarus died. But he has graciously provided for the prevention of that anguish and bitterness of sorrow, which is, upon such occasions, the portion of such as live without God in the world; and has engaged that all shall work together for good, and yield the

peaceable fruits of righteousness. May he bless you with a sweet serenity of spirit, and a cheerful hope of the glory that shall shortly be revealed.

I intimated that I would not trouble you with my own sense and share of this loss. If you remember the great kindness I always received from Mr. T—— and yourself, as often as opportunity afforded, and if you will believe me possessed of any sensibility or gratitude, you will conclude that my concern is not small. I feel likewise for the public. Will it be a consolation to you, Madam, to know that you do not mourn alone? A character so exemplary as a friend, a counsellor, a christian, and a minister, will be long and deeply regretted; and many will join with me in praying, that you, who are most nearly interested, may be signally supported, and feel the propriety of Mrs. Rowe's acknowledgment,

> Thou dost but take the dying lamp away,
> To bless me with thine own unclouded day.

We join in most affectionate respects and condolence. May the Lord bless you and keep you, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

April 3, 1775.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE long and often purposed waiting upon you with a second letter, though one thing or other still caused delay; for though I could not but wish to hear from you, I was far from making that a condition of my writing. If you have leisure and spirits to favour me with a line now and then, it will give us much pleasure; but if not, it will be a sufficient inducement with me to write, to know that you give me liberty, and that you will receive my letters in good part. At the same time, I must add, that my various engagements will not permit me to break in upon you so often as my sincere affection would otherwise prompt me to do.

I heartily thank you for yours, and hope my soul desires to praise the Lord on your behalf. I am persuaded that his goodness to you, in supporting you under a trial so sharp in itself, and in the circumstances that attended it, has been an encouragement and comfort to many. It is in such apparently severe times that the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of the Lord, and the power and proper effects of his precious gospel, are most eminently displayed. I would hope, and I do believe, that the knowledge of your case has animated some of the Lord's people against those anxious fears, which they sometimes feel when they look upon their earthly comforts with too careful an eye, and their hearts are ready to sink at the thought. What should I do, and how should I behave, were the Lord pleased to take away my desire with a stroke? But we see he can supply their absence, and afford us superior comforts without them. The gospel reveals one thing needful, the pearl of great price; and supposes that they who possess this are provided for against all events, and have ground of unshaken hope, and a source of never-failing consolation under every change they can meet with during their pilgrimage state. When his people are enabled to set their seal to this, not only in theory, when all things go smooth, but practically, when called upon to pass through the fire and water, then his grace is glorified in them and by them: then it appears both to themselves and to others, that they have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor amused themselves with empty notions; then they know in themselves, and it is evidenced to others, that God is with them of a truth. In this view a believer, when in some good measure divested from that narrow selfish disposition which cleaves so close to us by nature, will not only submit to trials, but rejoice in them, notwithstanding the feelings and reluctance of the flesh. For if I am redeemed from misery by the blood of Jesus, and if he is now preparing me a mansion near himself, that I may drink of the rivers of pleasure at his right hand for evermore; the question is not (at least ought not to be), How may I pass through life with the least inconvenience? but, How may my little span of life be made most subservient to the praise and glory of him who loved me, and gave himself for me? Where the Lord gives this desire, he will gratify it; and as afflictions for the most part afford the fairest opportunities of this kind, therefore it is, that those whom he is pleased eminently to honour are usually called, at one time or another, to the heaviest trials; not because he loves to grieve them, but because he hears their prayers, and accepts their desires of doing him service in the world. The post of honour in wars is so called because attended with difficulties and dangers which but few are supposed equal to; yet generals usually allot these hard services to their favourites and friends, who, on their parts, eagerly accept them as tokens of favour and marks of confidence. Should we, therefore, not account it an honour and a privilege, when the Captain of our salvation assigns us a difficult post? since he can and does (which no earthly commander can) inspire his soldiers with wisdom, courage, and strength, suitable to their situation, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10. I am acquainted with a few who have been led thus into the fore-front of the battle: they suffered much; but I have never heard them say they suffered too much; for the Lord stood by

them and stregthened them. Go on, my dear Madam; yet a little while, Jesus will wipe away all tears from your eyes; you will see your beloved friend again, and he and you will rejoice together for ever.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

October 24 1775.

MY DEAR MADAM,

THE manner in which you mention Omicron's letters, I hope, will rather humble me than puff me up. Your favourable acceptance of them, if alone, might have the latter effect; but alas! I feel myself so very defective in those things, the importance of which I endeavoured to point out to others, that I almost appear to myself to be one of those who say, but do not. I find it much easier to speak to the hearts of others than to my own. Yet I have cause beyond many to bless God, that he has given me some idea of what a christian ought to be, and I hope a real desire of being one myself; but verily I have attained but a very little way. A friend hinted to me, that the character I have given of C, or Grace in the full ear, must be from my own experience, or I could not have written it. To myself, however, it appears otherwise; but I am well convinced, that the state of C is attainable, and more to be desired than mountains of gold and silver. But I find you complain likewise; though it appears to me, and I believe to all who know you, that the Lord has been peculiarly gracious to you, in giving you much of the spirit in which he delights, and by which his name and the power of his gospel are glorified. It seems, therefore, that we are not competent judges either of ourselves or of others. I take it for granted, that they are the most excellent christians who are most abased in their own eyes: but lest you think upon this ground that I am something, because I can say so many humiliating things of myself, I must prevent your over-rating me, by assuring you, that my confessions rather express what I know I ought to think of myself, than what I actually do. Naturalists suppose, that if the matter of which the earth is formed were condensed as much as it is capable of, it would occupy but a very small space; in proof of which they observe, that a cubical pane of glass, which appears smooth and impervious to us, must be exceedingly porous in itself; since in every assignable point it receives and transmits the rays of light; and yet gold, which is the most solid substance we are acquainted with, is but about eight times heavier than glass which is made up (if I may say so) of nothing but pores. In like manner, I conceive, that inherent grace, when it is dilated, and appears to the greatest advantage in a sinner, would be found to be very small and inconsiderable, if it were condensed, and absolutely separated from every mixture. The highest attainments in this life are very inconsiderable, compared with what should properly result from our relation and obligations to a God of infinite holiness. The nearer we approach to him, the more we are sensible of this. While we only hear of God as it were by the ear, we seem to be something; but when, as in the case of Job, he discovers himself more sensibly to us, Job's language becomes ours, and the height of our attainment is, to abhor ourselves in dust and ashes.

I hope I do not write too late to meet you at Bath. I pray that your health may be benefited by the waters, and your soul comforted by the Lord's blessing upon the ordinances, and the converse of his children. If any of the friends you expected to see are still there, to whom we are known, and my name should be mentioned, I beg you to say, we desire to be respectfully remembered to them. Had I wings, I would fly to Bath while you are there. As it is, I endeavour to be with you in spirit. There certainly is a real, though secret, a sweet, though mysterious communion of saints, by virtue of their common union with Jesus. Feeding upon the same bread, drinking of the same fountain, waiting at the same mercy-seat, and aiming at the same ends, they have fellowship one with another, though at a distance. Who can tell how often the Holy Spirit, who is equally present with them all, touches the hearts of two or more of his children at the same instant, so as to excite a sympathy of pleasure, prayer, or praise, on each other's account? It revives me sometimes in a dull and dark hour to reflect, that the Lord has in mercy given me a place in the hearts of many of his people; and perhaps some of them may be speaking to him on my behalf, when I have hardly power to utter a word for myself. For kind services of this sort, I persuade myself I am often indebted to you. O that I were enabled more fervently to repay you in the same way! I can say, that I attempt it; I love and honour you greatly, and your concernments are often upon my mind.

We spent most of a week with Mr. B—— since we returned from London, and he has been once here. We have reason to be very thankful for his connexion; I find but few like-minded with him, and his family is filled with the grace and peace of the gospel. I never visit them but I meet with something to humble, quicken and edify me. Oh! what will heaven be, where there shall be all who love the Lord Jesus, and they only; where all imperfection, and whatever now abates or interrupts their joy in their Lord and in each other, shall cease for ever. There at least I hope to meet you, and spend an eternity with

you, in admiring the riches and glory of redeeming love.

We join in a tender of the most affectionate respects.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

October 28, 1777.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WHAT can I say for myself, to let your obliging letter remain so long unanswered, when your kind solicitude for us induced you to write? I am ashamed of the delay. You would have heard from me immediately, had I been at home. But I have reason to be thankful that we were providentially called to London a few days before the fire; so that Mrs. —— was mercifully preserved from the alarm and shock she must have felt, had she been upon the spot. Your letter followed me hither, and was in my possession more than a week before my return. I purposed writing every day, but indeed I was much hurried and engaged. Yet I am not excused: I ought to have saved time from my meals or my sleep, rather than appear negligent or ungrateful. I now seize the first post I could write by since I came home. The fire devoured twelve houses; and it was a mercy, and almost a miracle, that the whole town was not destroyed, which must, humanly speaking, have been the case, had not the night been calm, as two-thirds of the buildings were thatched. No lives were lost, no person considerably hurt, and I believe the contributions of the benevolent will prevent the loss from being greatly felt. It was at the distance of a quarter of a mile from my house.

Your command limits my attention at present to a part of your letter, and points me out a subject. Yet, at the same time, you lay me under a difficulty. I would not willingly offend you, and I hope the Lord has taught me not to aim at saying handsome things. I deal not in compliments, and religious compliments are the most unseemly of any. But why might I not express my sense of the grace of God manifested in you as well as in another? I believe our hearts are all alike destitute of every good, and prone to every evil. Like money from the same mint, they bear the same impression of total depravity; but grace makes a difference, and grace deserves the praise. Perhaps it ought not greatly to displease you, that others do, and must, and will think better of you than you do of yourself. If I do, how can I help it, when I form my judgment entirely from what you say and write? I cannot consent that you should seriously appoint me to examine and judge of your state. I thought you knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what your views and desires are; yea, you express them in your letter, in full agreement with what the scriptures declare of the principles, desires, and feelings of a christian. It is true that you feel contrary principles, that you are conscious of defects and defilements; but it is equally true that you could not be right if you did not feel these things. To be conscious of them, and humbled for them, is one of the surest marks of grace; and to be more deeply sensible of them than formerly is the best evidence of growth in grace. But when the enemy would tempt us to doubt and distrust, because we are not perfect, then he fights, not only against our peace, but against the honour and faithfulness of our dear Lord. Our righteousness is in him, and our hope depends, not upon the exercise of grace in us, but upon the fulness of grace and love in him, and upon his obedience unto death.

There is, my dear Madam, a difference between the holiness of a sinner and that of an angel. The angels have never sinned, nor have they tasted of redeeming love: they have no inward conflicts, no law of sin warring in their members; their obedience is perfect; their happiness is complete. Yet if I be found among redeemed sinners, I need not wish to be an angel. Perhaps God is not less glorified by your obedience, and, not to shock you, I will add by mine, than by Gabriel's. It is a mighty manifestation of his grace indeed, when it can live, and act, and conquer in such hearts as ours; when, in defiance of an evil nature and an evil world, and all the force and subtilty of Satan, a weak worm is still upheld, and enabled not only to climb, but to thresh the mountains; when a small spark is preserved through storms and floods. In these circumstances, the work of grace is to be estimated, not merely from its imperfect appearance, but from the difficulties it has to struggle with and overcome; and therefore our holiness does not consist in great attainments, but in spiritual desires, in hungerings, thirstings, and mournings; in humiliation of heart, poverty of spirit, submission, meekness; in cordial admiring thoughts of Jesus, and dependence upon him alone for all we want. Indeed these may be said to be great attainments; but they who have most of them are most sensible that they, in and of themselves, are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing, and see daily cause for abhorring themselves and repenting in dust and ashes.

Our view of death will not always be alike, but in proportion to the degree in which the Holy Spirit is pleased to communicate his sensible influence. We may anticipate the moment of dissolution with pleasure and desire in the morning, and be ready to shrink from the thought of it before night. But though our frames and perceptions vary, the

report of faith concerning it is the same. The Lord usually reserves dying strength for a dying hour. When Israel was to pass Jordan, the ark was in the river; and though the rear of the host could not see it, yet as they successively came forward and approached the banks, they all beheld the ark, and all went safely over. As you are not weary of living, if it be the Lord's pleasure, so I hope, for the sake of your friends and the people whom you love, he will spare you amongst us a little longer; but when the time shall arrive which he has appointed for your dismission, I make no doubt but he will overpower all your fears, silence all your enemies, and give you a comfortable, triumphant entrance into his kingdom. You have nothing to fear from death; for Jesus, by dying, has disarmed it of its sting, has perfumed the grave, and opened the gates of glory for his believing people. Satan, so far as he is permitted, will assault our peace, but he is a vanquished enemy; our Lord holds him in a chain, and sets him bounds which he cannot pass. He provides for us likewise the whole armour of God, and has promised to cover our heads himself in the day of battle, to bring us honourably through every skirmish, and to make us more than conquerors at last. If you think my short unexpected interview with Mr. C—— may justify my wishing he should know that I respect his character, love his person, and rejoice in what the Lord has done and is doing for him and by him, I beg you tell him so; but I leave it entirely to yourself.

We join in most affectionate respects.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MR. ——.

LETTER I.

March 7, 1765.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR favour of the 19th February came to my hand yesterday. I have read it with attention, and very willingly sit down to offer you my thoughts. Your case reminds me of my own: my first desires towards the ministry were attended with great uncertainties and difficulties, and the perplexity of my own mind was heightened by the various and opposite judgments of my friends. The advice I have to offer is the result of painful experience and exercise, and for this reason, perhaps, may not be unacceptable to you. I pray our gracious Lord to make it useful.

I was long distressed, as you are, about what was or was not a proper call to the ministry. It now seems to me an easy point to solve; but, perhaps, it will not be so to you, till the Lord shall make it clear to yourself in your own case. I have not room to say so much as I could. In brief, I think it principally includes three things:

1. A warm and earnest desire to be employed in this service. I apprehend the man who is once moved by the Spirit of God to this work, will prefer it, if attainable, to thousands of gold and silver: so that, though he is at times intimidated by a sense of its importance and difficulty, compared with his own great insufficiency (for it is to be presumed a call of this sort, if indeed from God, will be accompanied with humility and self-abasement), yet he cannot give it up. I hold it a good rule to inquire in this point, whether the desire to preach is most fervent in our most lively and spiritual frames, or when we are most laid in the dust before the Lord? If so, is a good sign. But if, as is sometimes the case, a person is very earnest to be a preacher to others, when he finds but little hungerings and thirstings after grace in his own soul, it is then to be feared, his zeal springs rather from a selfish principle than from the Spirit of God.

2. Besides this affectionate desire and readiness to preach, there must in due season appear some competent sufficiency as to gifts, knowledge, and utterance. Surely, if the Lord sends a man to teach others, he will furnish him with the means. I believe many have intended well in setting up for preachers, who yet went beyond or before their call in so doing. The main difference between a minister and a private christian, seems to consist in these ministerial gifts, which are imparted to him, not for his own sake, but for the edification of others. But then I say, these are to appear in due season; they are not to be expected instantaneously, but gradually, in the use of proper means. They are necessary for the discharge of the ministry, but not necessary as pre-requisites to warrant our desires after it. In your case, you are young, and have time before you; therefore, I think you need not as yet perplex yourself with inquiring if you have these gifts already. It is sufficient if your desire is fixed, and you are willing, in the way of prayer and diligence, to wait upon the Lord for them; as yet you need them not.

3. That which finally evidences a proper call, is a correspondent opening in providence, by a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work. And till this coincidence arrives, you must not expect to be always clear from hesitation in your own mind

The principal caution on this head is, not to be too hasty in catching at first appearances. If it be the Lord's will to bring you into his ministry, he has already appointed your place and service; and though you know it not at present, you shall at a proper time. If you had the talents of an angel, you could do no good with them till his hour is come, and till he leads you to the people whom he has determined to bless by your means. It is very difficult to restrain ourselves within the bounds of prudence here, when our zeal is warm: a sense of the love of Christ upon our hearts, and a tender compassion for poor sinners, is ready to prompt us to break out too soon;—but he that believeth shall not make haste. I was about five years under this constraint: sometimes I thought I must preach, though it was in the streets. I listened to every thing that seemed plausible, and to many things which were not so. But the Lord graciously, and as it were insensibly, hedged up my way with thorns; otherwise, if I had been left to my own spirit, I should have put it quite out of my power to have been brought into such a sphere of usefulness, as he in his good time has been pleased to lead me to. And I can now see clearly, that at the time I would first have gone out, though my intention was, I hope, good in the main, yet I over-rated myself, and had not that spiritual judgment and experience, which are requisite for so great a service. I wish you therefore to take time; and if you have a desire to enter into the established church, endeavour to keep your zeal within moderate bounds, and avoid every thing that might unnecessarily clog your admission with difficulties. I would not have you hide your profession, or to be backward to speak for God; but avoid what looks like preaching, and be content with being a learner in the school of Christ for some years. The delay will not be lost time; you will be so much the more acquainted with the gospel, with your own heart, and with human nature: the last is a necessary branch of a minister's knowledge, and can only be acquired by comparing what passes within us, and around us, with what we read in the word of God.

I am glad to find you have a distaste both for Arminian and Antinomian doctrines; but let not the mistakes of others sit too heavy upon you. Be thankful for the grace that has made you to differ; be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: but beware of engaging in disputes, without evident necessity, and some probable hope of usefulness. They tend to eat out the life and savour of religion, and to make the soul lean and dry. Where God has begun a real work of grace, incidental mistakes will be lessened by time and experience; where he has not, it is of little signification what sentiments people hold, or whether they call themselves Arminians or Calvinists.

I agree with you, it is time enough for you to think of Oxford yet; and that if your purpose is fixed, and all circumstances render it prudent and proper to devote yourself to the ministry, you will do well to spend a year or two in private studies. It would be further helpful, in this view, to place yourself where there is gospel-preaching, and a lively people. If your favourable opinion of this place should induce you to come here, I shall be very ready to give you every assistance in my power. As I have trod exactly the path you seem to be setting out in, I might so far, perhaps, be more serviceable than those who are in other respects much better qualified to assist you. I doubt not but in this, and every other step, you will intreat the Lord's direction; and I hope you will not forget to pray for,

Sir,

Your affectionate friend, &c.

LETTER II.

January 7, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

I MUST beg you, once for all, to release me from any constraint about the length or frequency of my letters. Believe that I think of you, and pray for you, when you do not hear from me. Your correspondence is not quite so large as mine, therefore you may write the oftener. Your letters will be always welcome; and I will write to you when I find a leisure hour, and have any thing upon my mind to offer.

You seem sensible where your most observable failing lies, and to take reproof and admonition concerning it in good part; I therefore hope and believe the Lord will give you a growing victory over it. You must not expect habits and tempers will be eradicated instantaneously; but by perseverance in prayer, and observation upon the experiences of every day, much may be done in time. Now and then you will (as is usual in the course of war) lose a battle; but be not discouraged, but rally your forces, and return to the fight. There is a comfortable word, a leaf of the tree of life, for healing the wounds we receive, in 1 John ii. 1. If the enemy surprises you, and your heart smites you, do not stand astonished as if there was no help, nor give way to sorrow, as if there was no hope, nor attempt to heal yourself; but away immediately to the throne of grace, to the great physician, to the compassionate High-priest, and tell him all. Satan knows, that if he can keep us from confession, our wounds will rancle; but do you profit by David's experience, Psal. xxxii. 3—5. When we are simple and open

hearted in abasing ourselves before the Lord, though we have acted foolishly and ungratefully, he will seldom let us remain long, without affording us a sense of his compassion; for he is gracious; he knows our frame, and how to bear with us, though we can hardly bear with ourselves or with one another.

The main thing is to have the heart right with God: this will bring us in the end safely through many mistakes and blunders; but a double mind, a selfish spirit, that would halve things between God and the world, the Lord abhors. Though I have not yet had many opportunities of commending your prudence, I have always had a good opinion of your sincerity and integrity; if I am not mistaken in this, I make no doubt of your doing well. If the Lord is pleased to bless you, he will undoubtedly make you humble; for you cannot be either happy or safe, or have any probable hope of abiding usefulness, without it. I do not know that I have had any thing so much at heart in my connections with you, as to impress you with a sense of the necessity and advantages of an humble frame of spirit; I hope it has not been in vain. O, to be little in our own eyes! This is the ground-work of every grace; this leads to a continual dependence upon the Lord Jesus; this is the spirit which he has promised to bless; this conciliates us good will and acceptance amongst men: for he that abaseth himself is sure to be honoured. And that this temper is so hard to attain and preserve, is a striking proof of our depravity. For are we not sinners? Were we not rebels and enemies before we knew the gospel? and have we not been unfaithful, backsliding, and unprofitable ever since? Are we not redeemed by the blood of Jesus? and can we stand a single moment except he upholds us? Have we any thing which we have not received? or have we received any thing which we have not abused? Why then is dust and ashes proud?

I am glad you have found some spiritual acquaintance in your barren land. I hope you will be helpful to them, and they to you. You do well to guard against every appearance of evil. If you are heartily for Jesus, Satan owes you a grudge. One way or other, he will try to cut you out work, and the Lord may suffer him to go to the length of his chain. But though you are to keep your eye upon him, and expect to hear from him at every step, you need not be slavishly afraid of him; for Jesus is stronger and wiser than he, and there is a complete suit of armour provided for all who are engaged on the Lord's side.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Oct. 20, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

A CONCERN for the perplexity you have met with, from the objections which have been made against some expressions in my printed sermons, and, in general, against exhorting sinners to believe in Jesus, engages me to write immediately; otherwise I should have waited a little longer; for we are now upon the point of removing to the vicarage, and I believe this will be the last letter I shall write from the old house. I shall chiefly confine myself at present to the subject you propose.

In the first place, I beg you to be upon your guard against a reasoning spirit. Search the scriptures; and where you can find a plain rule or warrant for any practice, go boldly on; and be not discouraged because you may not be clearly able to answer or reconcile every difficulty that may either occur to your own mind, or be put in your way by others. Our hearts are very dark and narrow, and the very root of all apostacy is a proud disposition, to question the necessity or propriety of divine appointments. But the child-like simplicity of faith is to follow God without reasoning; taking it for granted, a thing must be right if he directs it, and charging all seeming inconsistencies to the account of our own ignorance.

I suppose the people that trouble you upon this head, are those who preach upon Arminian principles, and suppose a free will in man, in a greater or less degree, to turn to God when the gospel is proposed. These, if you speak to sinners at large, though they will approve of your doing so, will take occasion, perhaps, to charge you with acting in contradiction to your own principles. So, it seems, Mr. —— has said. I love and honour that man greatly, and I beg you will tell him so from me; and tell him farther, that the reason why he is not a Calvinist, is because he misapprehends our principles. If I had a proper call, I would undertake to prove the direct contrary; namely, that to exhort and deal plainly with sinners, to stir them up to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold of eternal life, is an attempt not reconcileable to sober reason, upon any other grounds than those doctrines which we are called Calvinists for holding; and that all the absurdities which are charged upon us, as consequences of what we teach, are indeed truly chargeable upon those who differ from us in these points. I think this unanswerably proved by Mr. Edwards, in his Discourse on the Freedom of the Will, though the chain of reasoning is so close, that few will give attention or take pains to pursue it. As to myself, if I was not a Calvinist, I think I should have

no more hope of success in preaching to men, than to horses or cows.

But these objections are more frequently urged by Calvinists themselves; many of them, I doubt not, good men, but betrayed into a curiosity of spirit, which often makes their ministry (if ministers) dry and inefficacious, and their conversation sour and unsavoury. Such a spirit is too prevalent in many professors, that if a man discovers a warm zeal for the glory of God, and is enabled to bear a faithful testimony to the gospel-truths; yea, though the Lord evidently blesses him, they overlook all, and will undervalue a sermon, which, upon the whole, they cannot but acknowledge to be scriptural, if they meet with a single sentence contrary to the opinion they have taken up. I am sorry to see such a spirit prevailing. But this I observe, that the ministers who give into this way, though good men and good preachers in other respects, are seldom very useful or very zealous; and those who are in private life, are more ready for dry points of disputation, at least harping upon a string of doctrines, than for experimental and heart-searching converse, whereby one may warm and edify another. Blessed be God, who has kept me and my people from this turn: if it should ever creep in or spread among us, I should be ready to write Ichabod upon our assemblies.

I advise you, therefore, to keep close to the Bible and prayer: bring your difficulties to the Lord, and entreat him to give you, and maintain in you, a simple spirit. Search the scriptures. How did Peter deal with Simon Magus? We have no right to think worse of any who can hear us, than the apostle did of him. He seemed almost to think his case desperate, and yet he advised him to repentance and prayer. Examine the same apostle's discourse, Acts iii., and the close of St. Paul's sermon, Acts xiii. The power is all of God; the means are likewise of his appointment; and he always is pleased to work by such means as may shew that the power is his. What was Moses's rod in itself, or the trumpets that threw down Jericho? What influence could the pool of Siloam have, that the eyes of the blind man, by washing in it, should be opened? or what could Ezekiel's feeble breath contribute to the making dry bones live? All these means were exceedingly disproportioned to the effect; but he who ordered them to be used, accompanied them with his power. Yet, if Moses had gone without his rod, if Joshua had slighted the rams horns, if the prophet had thought it foolishness to speak to dry bones, or the blind man refused to wash his eyes, nothing could have been done. The same holds good in the present subject: I do not reason, expostulate, and persuade sinners, because I think I can prevail with them, but because the Lord has commanded it. He directs me to address them as reasonable creatures; to take them by every handle; to speak to their consciences; to tell them of the terrors of the Lord and of his tender mercies; to argue with them what good they find in sin; whether they do not need a Saviour; to put them in mind of death, judgment, and eternity, &c. When I have done all, I know it is to little purpose, except the Lord speaks to their hearts; and this to his own, and at his own time, I am sure he will, because he has promised it. See Isaiah lv. 10, 11; Matth. xxviii. 20. Indeed, I have heard expressions in the warmth of delivery which I could not wholly approve, and therefore do not imitate. But, in general, I see no preaching made very useful for the gathering of souls, where poor sinners are shut out of the discourse. I think one of the closest and most moving addresses to sinners I ever met with, is in Dr. Owen's Exposition of the cxxxth Psalm, from p. 243 to 276 (in my edition). If you get it, and examine it, I think you will find it all agreeable to scripture; and he was a steady, deep-sighted Calvinist. I wish you to study it well, and make it your pattern. He handles the same point likewise in other places, and shews the weakness of the exceptions taken, somewhere at large, but I cannot just now find the passage. Many think themselves quite right, because they have not had their thoughts exercised at large, but have confined themselves to one track. There are extremes in every thing. I pray God to shew you the golden mean.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Aug. 30, 1770.

DEAR SIR,

I WOULD steal a few minutes here to write, lest I should not have leisure at home. I have not your letter with me, and therefore can only answer so far as I retain a general remembrance of the contents.

You will, doubtless, find rather perplexity than advantage from the multiplicity of advice you may receive, if you endeavour to reconcile and adopt the very different sentiments of your friends. I think it will be best to make use of them in a full latitude; that is, to correct and qualify them one by another, and to borrow a little from each, without confining yourself entirely to any. You will probably be advised to different extremes: it will then be impossible to follow both; but it may be practicable to find a middle path between them; and I believe this will generally prove the best and safest method. Only consult your own temper, and endeavour to incline rather to that side to which you are the least disposed, by the ordinary strain of your own inclination; for on that side you will be

in the least danger of erring. Warm and hasty dispositions will seldom move too slow, and those who are naturally languid and cool are as little liable to over-act their part.

With respect to the particulars you instance, I have generally thought you warm and enterprising enough, and therefore thought it best to restrain you; but I meant only to hold you in, till you had acquired some farther knowledge and observation both of yourself and of others. I have the pleasure to hope (especially of late) that you are become more self-diffident and wary than you were some time ago. And therefore, as your years and time are advancing, and you have been for a tolerable space under a probation of silence, I can make no objection to your attempting sometimes to speak in select societies; but let your attempts be confined to such, I mean where you are acquainted with the people, or the leading part of them, and be upon your guard against opening yourself too much among strangers. And again, I earnestly desire you would not attempt any thing of this sort in a very public way, which may perhaps bring you under inconveniences and will be inconsistent with the part you ought to act (in my judgment) from the time you receive Episcopal ordination. You may remember a simile I have sometimes used of green fruit; children are impatient to have it while it is green, but persons of more judgment will wait till it is ripe. Therefore I would wish your exhortations to be brief, private, and not very frequent. Rather give yourself to reading, meditation, and prayer.

As to speaking without notes, in order to do it successfully, a fund of knowlege should be first possessed. Indeed, in such societies as I hope you will confine your attempts to, it would not be practicable to use notes; but I mean, that if you design to come out as a preacher without notes from the first, you must use double diligence in study; your reading must not be confined to the scriptures; you should be acquainted with church history, have a general view of divinity as a system, know something of the state of controversies in past times and at present, and indeed of the general history of mankind. I do not mean that you should enter deeply into these things: but you will need to have your mind enlarged, your ideas increased, your style and manner formed; you should read, think, ——ite, compose, and use all diligence to exer-e and strengthen your faculties. If you ld speak extempore as a clergyman, you _t be able to come off roundly, and to fill p your hour with various matter, in tolera-le coherence, or else you will not be able to vercome the prejudice which usually prevails nongst the people. Perhaps it may be as ell to use some little scheme in the note-way, specially at the beginning; but a little trial ill best inform you what is most expedient.

Let your backwardness to prayer and reading the scriptures be ever so great, you must strive against it. This backwardness, with the doubts you speak of, are partly from your own evil heart, but perhaps chiefly temptations of Satan: he knows, if he can keep you from drawing water out of the wells of salvation, he will have much advantage. My soul goes often mourning under the same complaints, but at times the Lord gives me a little victory. I hope he will over-rule all our trials, to make us more humble, dependent, and to give us tenderness of spirit towards the distressed. The exercised and experienced christian, by the knowledge he has gained of his own heart, and the many difficulties he has had to struggle with, acquires a skill and compassion in dealing with others; and without such exercise, all our study, diligence, and gifts in other ways, would leave us much at a loss in some of the most important parts of our calling.

You have given yourself to the Lord for the ministry his providence has thus far favoured your views; therefore harbour not a thought of flinching from the battle, because the enemy appears in view, but resolve to endure hardship as a good solidier of Jesus Christ. Lift up your banner in his name; trust in him, and he will support you; but, above all things, be sure not to be either enticed or terrified from the privilege of a throne of grace.

Who your enemies are, or what they say, I know not; for I never conversed with them. Your friends here have thought you at times harsh and hasty in your manner, and rather inclining to self-confidence. These things I have often reminded you of; but I considered them as blemishes usually attendant upon youth, and which experience, temptation, and prayer would correct. I hope and believe you will do well. You will have a share in my prayers and best advice: and when I see occasion to offer a word of reproof, I shall not use any reserve.

Yours, &c.

LETTER V

July 25, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

I AM glad to hear you are accommodated at D——, where I hope your best endeavours will not be wanting to make yourself agreeable, by an humble, inoffensive, and circumspect behaviour.

I greatly approve of your speaking from one of the lessons in the afternoon; you will find it a great help to bring you gradually to that habit and readiness of expression which you desire; and you will perhaps find it make more impression upon your hearers than

what you read to them from the pulpit. However, I would not discourage or dissuade you from reading your sermons for a time. The chief inconvenience respecting yourself is that which you mention. A written sermon is something to lean upon; but it is best for a preacher to lean wholly upon the Lord. But set off gradually; the Lord will not despise the day of small things; pray heartily that your spirit may be right with him, and then all the rest will be well. And keep on writing; if you compose one sermon, and should find your heart enlarged to preach another, still your labour of writing will not be lost. If your conscience bears you witness that you desire to serve the Lord, his promise (now he has brought you into the ministry) of a sufficiency and ability for the work, belongs to you as much as to another. Your borrowing help from others may arise from a diffidence of yourself, which is not blameable; but it may arise in part likewise from a diffidence of the Lord, which is hurtful. I wish you may get encouragement from that word, Exodus iv. 11, 12. It was a great encouragement to me. While I would press you to diligence in every rational means for the improvement of your stock in knowledge, and your ability of utterance, I would have you remember that preaching is a gift. It cannot be learned by industry and imitation only, as a man may learn to make a chair or a table: it comes from above; and if you patiently wait upon God, he will bestow this gift upon you, and increase it in you. I will grow by exercise. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. And be chiefly solicitous to obtain an unction upon what you do say. Perhaps those sermons in which you feel yourself most deficient, may be made most useful to others. I hope you will endeavour likewise, to be plain and familiar in your language and manner (though not low or vulger), so as to suit yourself as much as possible to the apprehensions of the most ignorant people. There are in all congregations some persons exceedingly ignorant; yet they have precious souls, and the Lord often calls such. I pray the Lord to make you wise to win souls. I hope he will. You cannot be too jealous of your own heart: but let not such instances as Mr. M—— discourage you. Cry to him who is able to hold you up, that you may be safe, and you shall not cry in vain. It is, indeed, an alarming thought, that a man may pray and preach, be useful and acceptable for a time, and yet be nothing. But still the foundation of God standeth sure. I have a good hope, that I shall never have cause to repent the part I have taken in your concerns. While you keep in the path of duty, you will find it the path of safety. Be punctual in waiting upon God in secret. This is the life of every thing, the only way, and the sure way, of maintaining and renewing your strength.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND Mr. ———

LETTER I.

June 29, 1757.

DEAR SIR,

I ENDEAVOUR to be mindful of you in my prayers, that you may find both satisfaction and success, and that the Lord himself may be your light, to discover to you every part of your duty. I would earnestly press you and myself to be followers of those who have been followers of Christ; to aim at a life of self-denial; to renounce self-will, and to guard against self-wisdom. The less we have to do with the world the better; and, even in conversing with our brethren, we have been, and unless we watch and pray, shall often be, ensnared. Time is precious, and opportunities once gone, are gone for ever. Even by reading, and what we call studying, we may be comparatively losers. The shorter way is to be closely waiting upon God in humble, secret, fervent prayer. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in his hands; and he gives bountifully, without upbraiding. On the other hand, whatever we may undertake with a sincere desire to promote his glory, we may comfortably pursue: nothing is trivial that is done for him. In this view, I would have you, at proper intervals, pursue your studies, especially at those times when you are unfit for better work. Pray for me, that I may be enabled to break through the snares of vanity that lie in my way; that I may be crucified with Christ, and live a hidden life by faith in him who loved me and gave himself for me.

Adieu.

LETTER II.

August 31, 1757.

DEAR SIR,

I WISH you much of that spirit which was in the apostle, which made him content to become all things to all men, that he might gain some. I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ, and the brightest evidences that he is indeed our master. If any should seem inclined to treat you with less regard, because you are or have been a Methodist teacher, you will find forbearance, meekness, and long-suffering, the most prevailing means to conquer their prejudices. Our Lord has not only taught us to expect persecution from the world, though this alone is a trial too hard for flesh and blood; but we must look for what is much more grievous to a renewed mind, to be in some respects slighted, censured, and misunderstood, even by our christian brethren, and that, perhaps, in cases where we are really striving to promote the glory of God and the good of souls, and cannot, without the reproach of our consciences, alter our conduct, however glad we should be to have their approbation. Therefore, we are required, not only to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, but likewise to bear one another's burdens: which plainly intimates there will be something to be borne with on all hands; and happy indeed is he that is not offended. You may observe what unjust reports and surmises were received, even at Jerusalem, concerning the apostle Paul: and it seems he was condemned unheard, and that by many thousands too, Acts xxi. 20, 21: but we do not find that he was at all ruffled, or that he sought to retort any thing upon them, though doubtless, had he been so disposed, he might have

found something to have charged them with in his turn; but he calmly and willingly complied with every thing in his power to soften and convince them. Let us be followers of this pattern, so far as he was a follower of Christ; for even Christ pleased not himself. How did he bear with the mistakes, weakness, intemperate zeal and imprudent proposals of his disciples, while on earth; and how does he bear with the same things from you and me, and every one of his followers now? and do we, can we, think much to bear with each other for his sake? Have we all a full remission of ten thousand talents, which we owed him, and were utterly unable to pay, and do we wrangle amongst ourselves for a few pence? God forbid!

If you should be numbered among the regular Independents, I advise you not to offend any of them by unnecessary singularities. I wish you not to part with any truth, or with any thing really expedient; but if the omitting any thing of an indifferent nature will obviate prejudices, and increase a mutual confidence, why should not so easy a sacrifice be made? Above all, my dear friend, let us keep close to the Lord in a way of prayer: he giveth wisdom that is profitable to direct; he is the Wonderful Counsellor; there is no teacher like him. Why do the living seek to the dead? Why do we weary our friends and ourselves in running up and down, and turning over books for advice? If we shut our eyes upon the world and worldly things, and raise our thoughts upwards in humility and silence, should we not often hear the secret voice of the Spirit of God whispering to our hearts, and pointing out to us the way of truth and peace? Have we not often gone astray, and hurt either ourselves or our brethren, for want of attending to this divine instruction? Have we not sometimes mocked God, by pretending to ask direction from him, when we had fixed our determination before-hand! It is a great blessing to know that we are sincere; and next to this, to be convinced of our insincerity, and to pray against it.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

November 21, 1757.

DEAR SIR,

CAN you forgive so negligent a correspondent? I am indeed ashamed; but (if that is any good excuse) I use you no worse than my other friends. Whenever I write, I am obliged to begin with an apology; for, what with business and the incidental duties of every day, my time is always mortgaged before it comes into my hands, especially as I have so little skill in redeeming and improving it. I long to hear from you, and I long to see you; and indeed, from the terms of yours, I expected you here before this; which has been partly a cause of my delay. I have mislaid your letter, and cannot remember the particulars; in general, I remember you were well, and going on comfortably in your work; which was matter of joy to me; and my poor prayers are for you, that the Lord may own and prosper you more and more. The two great points we are called to pursue in this sinful divided world, are peace and holiness; I hope you are much in the study of them. These are the peculiar characteristics of a disciple of Jesus; they are the richest part of the enjoyments of heaven; and so far as they are received into the heart, they bring down heaven upon earth; and they are more inseparably connected between themselves than some of us are aware of. The longer I live, the more I see of the vanity and the sinfulness of our unchristian disputes; they eat up the very vitals of religion. I grieve to think how often I have lost my time and my temper that way, in presuming to regulate the vineyards of others, when I have neglected my own; when the beam in my own eye has so contracted my sight, that I could discern nothing but the mote in my neighbour's. I am now desirous to chuse a better part. Could I speak the publican's word with a proper feeling, I wish not for the tongue of men or angels to fight about notions or sentiments. I allow that every branch of gospel-truth is precious, that errors are abounding, and that it is our duty to bear an honest testimony to what the Lord has enabled us to find comfort in, and to instruct with meekness such as are willing to be instructed; but I cannot see it my duty, nay, I believe it would be my sin, to attempt to beat my notions into other people's heads. Too often I have attempted it in time past; but now I judge, that both my zeal and my weapons were carnal. When our dear Lord questioned Peter, after his fall and recovery, he said not, Art thou wise, learned, and eloquent? Nay, he said not, Art thou clear, and sound, and orthodox? But this only, "Lovest thou me?" An answer to this was sufficient then, why not now? Any other answer, we may believe, would have been insufficient then. If Peter had made the most pompous confession of his faith and sentiments, still the first question would have recurred, "Lovest thou me?" This is a scripture precedent. Happy the preacher, whoever he be, my heart and my prayers are with him, who can honestly and steadily appropriate Peter's answer. Such a man, I say, I am ready to hear, though he should be as much mistaken in some points as Peter afterwards appears to have been in others. What a pity is it, that christians in succeeding ages should think the constraining force of the love of Christ too weak, and suppose the end better answered by forms, sub-

scriptions, and questions of their own devising? I cannot acquit even those churches who judge themselves nearest the primitive rule in this respect: alas! will-worship and presumption may creep into the best external forms. But the misfortune both in churches and private christians is, that we are too prone rather to compare ourselves with others, than to judge by the scriptures; and while each can see that they give not into the errors and mistakes of the opposite party, both are ready to conclude that they are right: and thus it happens, that an attachment to a supposed gospel-order will recommend a man sooner and farther to some churches, than an eminency of gospel-practice. I hope you will beware of such a spirit, whenever you publicly assume the Independent character: this, like a worm at the root, has nipt the graces, and hindered the usefulness, of many a valuable man; and those who change sides and opinions are the most liable to it. For the pride of our heart insensibly prompts us to cast about far and near for arguments to justify our own behaviour, and makes us too ready to hold the opinions we have taken up to the very extreme, that those amongst whom we are newly come may not suspect our sincerity. In a word, let us endeavour to keep close to God, to be much in prayer, to watch carefully over our hearts, and leave the busy warm spirits to make the best of their work. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and that wait on him continually; to these he will shew his covenant, not notionally, but experimentally. A few minutes of the Spirit's teaching will furnish us with more real useful knowledge, than toiling through whole folios of commentators and expositors. They are useful in their places and are not to be undervalued by those who can perhaps in general do better without them; but it will be our wisdom to deal less with the streams, and be more close in applying to the fountain-head. The scripture itself, and the Spirit of God, are the best and the only sufficient expositors of scripture. Whatever men have valuable in their writings, they got it from hence; and the way is as open to us as to any of them. There is nothing required but a teachable humble spirit; and learning, as it is commonly called, is not necessary in order to this. I commend you to the grace of God, and remain

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

Jan. 10, 1760.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE procured Cennick's sermons; they are, in my judgment, sound and sweet. O that you and I had a double portion of that spirit and unction which is in them. Come, let us not despair; the fountain is as full and as free as ever;—precious fountain, ever flowing with blood and water, milk and wine. This is the stream that heals the wounded, refreshes the weary, satisfies the hungry, strengthens the weak, and confirms the strong; it opens the eyes of the blind, softens the heart of stone, teaches the dumb to sing, and enables the lame and paralytic to walk, to leap, to run, to fly, to mount up with eagles wings: a taste of this stream raises earth to heaven, and brings down heaven upon earth. Nor is it a fountain only; it is a universal blessing, and assumes a variety of shapes to suit itself to our wants. It is a sun, a shield, a garment, a shade, a banner, a refuge: it is bread, the true bread, the very staff of life: it is life itself, immortal, eternal life!

The cross of Jesus Christ my Lord,
Is food and med'cine, shield and sword.

Take that for your motto; wear it in your heart; keep it in your eye; have it often in your mouth till you can find something better. The cross of Christ is the tree of life and the tree of knowledge combined. Blessed be God, there is neither prohibition nor flaming sword to keep us back, but it stands like a tree by the highway-side, which affords its shade to every passenger without distinction. Watch and pray. We live in a sifting time: error gains ground every day. May the name and love of our Saviour Jesus keep us and all his people. Either write or come very soon to,

Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

November 15, 1760.

DEAR SIR,

IF your visit should be delayed, let me have a letter. I want either good news or good advice; to hear that your soul prospers, or to receive something that may quicken my own. The apostle says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:" alas! we know how to say something about it, but how faint and feeble are our real perceptions of it! Our love to him is the proof and measure of what we know of his love to us. Surely then, we are mere children in this kind of knowledge, and every other kind is vain. What should we think of a man who should neglect his business, family, and all the comforts of life, that he might study the Chinese language; though he knows before-hand he should never be able to attain it, nor ever find occasion or opportunity to use it? The pursuit of every branch of knowledge that is not closely connected with the one thing needful, is no less ridiculous.

You know something of our friend Mrs. B——. She has been more than a month

confined to her bed, and I believe her next remove will be to her coffin. The Lord has done great things for her. Though she has been a serious exemplary person all her life, when the prospect of death presented, she began to cry out earnestly, "What shall I do to be saved?" But her solicitude is at an end; she has seen the salvation of God, and now for the most part rejoices in something more than hope. This you will account good news, I am sure. Let it be your encouragement and mine. The Lord's arm is not shortened, nor is his presence removed; he is near us still, though we perceive him not. May he guide you with his eye in all your public and private concerns, and may he in particular bless our communications to our mutual advantage.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

July 29, 1761.

DEAR SIR,

ARE the quarrels made up? Tell those who know what communion with Jesus is worth, that they will never be able to maintain it, if they give way to the workings of pride, jealousy, and anger. This will provoke the Lord to leave them dry, to command the clouds of his grace that they rain no rain upon them. These things are sure signs of a low frame, and a sure way to keep it so. Could they be prevailed upon, from a sense of the pardoning love of God to their own souls, to forgive each other, as the Lord forgives us, freely, fully, without condition and without reserve, they would find this like breaking down a stone-wall, which has hitherto shut up their prayers from the Lord's ears, and shut out his blessing from filling their hearts. Tell them, I hope to hear that all animosities, little and big, are buried, by mutual consent, in the Redeemer's grave. Alas! the people of God have enemies enough: Why, then, will they weaken their own hands? Why will they help their enemies to pull down the Lord's work? Why will they grieve those that wish them well, cause the weak to stumble, the wicked to rejoice, and bring a reproach upon their holy profession? Indeed, this is no light matter; I wish it may not lead them to something worse; I wish they may be wise in time, lest Satan gains further advantage over them, and draw them to something that shall make them (as David did) roar under the pains of broken bones. But I must break off. May God give you wisdom, faithfulness, and patience. Take care that you do not catch an angry spirit yourself, while you aim to suppress it in others; this will spoil all, and you will exhort, advise, and weep in vain. May you rather be an example and pattern to the flock; and in this view, be not surprised if you yourself meet some hard usage; rather rejoice that you will thereby have an opportunity to exemplify your own rules, and to convince your people, that what you recommend to them you do not speak by rote, but from the experience of your heart. One end why our Lord was tempted, was for the encouragement of his poor followers, that they might know him to be a High-Priest suited to them, having had a fellow-feeling in their distresses. For the like reason, he appoints his ministers to be sorely exercised, both from without and within, that they may sympathize with their flock, and know in their own hearts the deceitfulness of sin, the infirmities of the flesh, and the way in which the Lord supports and bears with all that trust him. Therefore be not discouraged; usefulness and trials, comforts and crosses, strength and exercise, go together. But remember he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life:" When you get to heaven, you will not complain of the way by which the Lord brought you. Farewell. Pray for us.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

Dec. 14, 1761.

DEAR SIR,

I PRAY the Lord to accompany you; but cannot help fearing you go on too fast. If you have not (as I am sure you ought not) made an absolute promise, but only conditional, you need not be so solicitous; depend upon it, when the Lord is pleased to remove you, he will send one to supply your place. I am grieved that your mind is so set upon a step, which, I fear, will occasion many inconveniencies to a people who have deserved your best regard. Others may speak you fairer, but none wishes you better than myself; therefore I hope you allow me to speak my mind plainly, and believe that it is no pleasure to me to oppose your inclinations. As to your saying they will take no denial, it has no weight with me. Had they asked what you were exceedingly averse to, you would soon have expressed yourself so as to convince them it was to no purpose to urge you; but they saw something in your manner or language that encouraged them; they saw the proposal was agreeable to you, that you were not at all unwilling to exchange your old friends for new ones; and this is the reason they would take no denial. If you should live to see those who are most forward in pressing you become the first to discourage you, you will think seriously of my words.

If I thought my advice would prevail, it

should be this: Call the people together, and desire them, if possible, to forget you ever intended to depart from them; and promise not to think of a removal, till the Lord shall make your way so clear, that even they shall have nothing reasonable to object against it. You may keep your word with your other friends too; for when a proper person shall offer, as likely to please and satisfy the people as yourself, I will give my hearty consent to your removal.

Consider what it is you would have in your office, but maintenance, acceptance, and success. Have you not these where you are? Are you sure of having them where you are going? Are you sure the Spirit of God (without which you will do nothing) will be with you there, as he has been with you hitherto? Perhaps, if you act in your own spirit, you may find as great a change as Samson. I am ready to weep when I think what difficulties were surmounted to accomplish your ordination; and now, when the people thought themselves fixed, that you should so soon disappoint them.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Feburary 5, 1762.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been often thinking of you since your removal, and was glad to receive your letter today. I hope you will still go on to find more and more encouragement to believe, that the Lord has disposed and led you to the step you have taken. For though I wrote with the greatest plainness and earnestness, and would, if in my power, have prevented it while under deliberation, yet, now it is done and past recall, I would rather help than dishearten you. Indeed, I cannot say that my view of the affair is yet altered. The best way not to be cast down hereafter, is not to be too sanguine at first. You know there is something pleasing in novelty; as yet you are new to them, and they to you: I pray God, that you may find as cordial a regard from them as at present, when you have been with them as many years as in the place you came from. And if you have grace to be watchful and prayful, all will be well; for we serve a gracious Master, who knows how to over-rule even our mistakes to his glory and our own advantage. Yet I observe, that when we do wrong, sooner or later we smart for our indiscretion, perhaps many years afterwards. After we have seen and confessed our fault, and received repeated proofs of pardoning love, as to the guilt, yet chastisement, to remind us more sensibly of our having done amiss, will generally find us out. So it was with David in the matter of Uriah; the Lord put away his sin, healed his broken bones, and restored unto him the light of his countenance; yet many troubles, in consequence of this affair, followed one upon another, till at length (many years afterwards) he was driven from Jerusalem by his own son. So it was with Jacob: he dealt deceitfully with his brother Esau; notwithstanding this the Lord appeared to him and blessed him, gave him comfortable promises, and revealed himself to him from time to time; yet after an interval of twenty years, his fault was brought afresh to his remembrance, and his heart trembled within him, when he heard his brother was coming with armed men to meet him. And thus I have found it in my own experience: things which I had forgotten a long while have been brought to my mind by providential dispensations which I little expected; but the first rise of which I have been able to trace far back, and forced to confess, that the Lord is indeed He that judgeth the heart and trieth the reins. I hint this for your caution; you know best upon what grounds you have proceeded; but if (though I do not affirm it, I hope otherwise), I say, if you have acted too much in your own spirit, been too hasty and precipitate; if you have not been sufficiently tender of your people, nor thoughtful of the consequences which your departure will probably involve them in; if you were impatient under the Lord's hand, and, instead of waiting his time and way of removing the trials and difficulties you found, you have ventured upon an attempt to free and mend yourself; I say, if any of these things have mixed with your determinations, something will fall out to shew you your fault: either you will not find the success you hope for, or friends will grow cold, or enemies and difficulties you dream not of, will present themselves; or your own mind will alter, so as what seems now most pleasant will afford you little pleasure. Yet, though I write thus, I do not mean, as I said before, to discourage you, but that you may be forewarned, humble, and watchful. If you should at any time have a different view of things, you may take comfort from the instances I have mentioned. The trials of David and Jacob were sharp, but they were short; and they proved to their advantage, put them upon acts of humiliation and prayer, and ended in a double blessing. Nothing can harm us that quickens our earnestness and frequency in applying to a throne of grace: only trust the Lord, and keep close to him, and all that befalls you shall be for good. Temptations end in victory; troubles prove an increase of consolation; yea, our very falls and failings tend to increase our spiritual wisdom, to give us a greater knowledge of Satan's devices, and make us more habitually upon our guard against them. Happy case of the believer in Jesus! when bitten by the fiery serpent he needs not go far for a

remedy; he has only to look to a bleeding Saviour, and be healed.

I think one great advantage that attends a removal into a new place is, that it gives an easy opportunity of forming a new plan, and breaking off any little habits which we have found inconvenient, and yet, perhaps could not so readily lay aside, where our customs and acquaintance had been long formed. I earnestly recommend to you to reflect, if you cannot recollect some things which you have hitherto omitted, which may properly be now taken up; some things formerly allowed, which may now with ease and convenience be laid aside. I only give the hint in general; for I have nothing in particular to charge you with. I recommend to you to be very choice of your time, especially the fore part of the day. Let your morning hours be devoted to prayer, reading, and study; and suffer not the importunity of friends to rob you of the hours before noon, without a just necessity: and if you accustom yourself to rise early in the morning, you will find a great advantage. Be careful to avoid losing your thoughts, whether in books or otherwise, upon any subjects which are not of a direct subserviency to your great design, till towards dinner-time. The afternoon is not so favourable to study: this is a proper time for paying and receiving visits, conversing among your friends, or unbending with a book of instructive entertainment, such as history, &c. which may increase your general knowledge, without a great confinement of your attention; but let the morning-hours be sacred. I think you would likewise find advantage in using your pen more. Write short notes upon the scriptures you read, or transcribe the labours of others; make extracts from your favourite authors, especially those who, besides a fund of spiritual and evangelical matter, have a happy talent of expressing their thoughts in a clear and lively, or pathetic manner. You would find a continued exercise in this way would be greatly useful to form your own style, and help your delivery and memory; you would become insensibly master of their thoughts, and find it more easy to express yourself justly and clearly: what we read we easily lose, but what we commit to paper is not so soon forgot. Especially remember (what you well know, but we cannot too often remind each other), that frequent secret prayer is the life of all we do. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given; but all our diligence will fail, if we are remiss in this particular. I am glad it is not thought necessary for you to go to London on this occasion. I hope you will not think it necessary upon any other account. Rather keep close to the work you have undertaken, and endeavour to avoid any thing that looks like ostentation, or a desire to be taken notice of. You see I advise you with the freedom of a friend who loves you, and longs to see your work and your soul prosper.

You will, I doubt not, endeavour to promote the practice of frequent prayer in the houses that receive you. I look upon prayer-meetings as the most profitable exercises (excepting the public preaching) in which christians can engage: they have a direct tendency to kill a wordly, trifling spirit, to draw down a divine blessing upon all our concerns, compose differences, and enkindle (at least to maintain) the flame of divine love amongst brethren. But I need not tell you the advantages; you know them: I only would exhort you, and the rather as I find in my own case the principal cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is owing to an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can write, or read, or converse, or hear, with a ready will; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these, and the more spiritual any duty is the more my carnal heart is apt to start from it. May the Lord pour forth his precious spirit of prayer and supplication in both our hearts!

I am not well pleased with the account you give of so many dry bones. It increases my wonder, that you could so readily exchange so much plump flesh and blood as you had about you for a parcel of skeletons. I wish they may not haunt you and disturb your peace. I wish these same dry bones do not prove thorns in your sides and in your eyes. You say, now you have to pray, and prophecy, and wait for the four winds to come and put life into these bones. God grant that your prayers may be answered: but if I knew a man who possessed a field in a tolerable soil, which had afforded him some increase every year, and if this man, after having bestowed seven years labour in cultivating, weeding, manuring, fencing, &c., just when he has brought his ground (in his neighbour's judgment) into good order, and might reasonably hope for larger crops than he had ever yet seen, should suddenly forego all his advantages, leave his good seed for the birds to eat, pull up the young fences which cost him so much pains to plant, and all this for the sake of making a new experiment upon the top of a mountain; though I might heartily wish him great success I could not honestly give him great encouragement. You have parted with that for a trifle which in my eyes seems an inestimable jewel, I mean the hearts and affections of an enlightened people. This appears to me one of the greatest honours and greatest pleasures a faithful minister can possess, and which many faithful and eminent ministers have never been able to obtain. This gave you a vast advantage; your gift was more acceptable there than that of any other person, and more than you will probably find elsewhere. For I cannot make a comparison between the hasty approbation of a few, whose

eyes are but beginning to open, and their affections and passions warm, so that they must, if possible, have the man that first catches their attention: I say, I cannot think this worthy to be compared to the regard of a people who understood the gospel, were able to judge of men and doctrines, and had trial of you for so many years. It is, indeed, much to your honour (it proves that you were faithful, diligent, and exemplary), that the people proved so attached to you; but that you should force yourself from them, when they so dearly loved you, and so much needed you, this has made all your friends in these parts to wonder, and your enemies to rejoice; and I, alas! know not what to answer in your behalf to either. Say not, "I hate this Micaiah, for he prophesies not good of me, but evil," but allow me the privilege of a friend. My heart is full when I think what has happened, and what will probably be the consequence. In a few words, I am strongly persuaded you have taken an unadvised step, and would therefore prepare you for the inconvenience and uneasiness you may probably meet with. And if I am (as I desire I may prove) mistaken, my advice will do no harm; you will want something to balance the caresses and success you meet with.

We should be very glad to see you, and hope you will take your measures, when you do come, to lengthen your usual stay, in proportion to the difference of the distance. Pray for us.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MRS. P——.

LETTER I.

May —, 1774.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE had sudden notice that I may send you a hasty line, to express our satisfaction in hearing that you had a safe though perilous journey. I hope I shall be always mindful to pray that the Lord may guide, bless, and comfort you, and give you such a manifestation of his person, power, and grace, as may set you at liberty from all fear, and fill you with abiding peace and joy in believing. Remember that Jesus has all power, the fulness of compassion, and embraces with open arms all that come to him for life and salvation.

I know not whether Mrs. ——'s illness was before or since my last. Through mercy she is better again; and I remain so, though death and illness are still walking about the town. O for grace to take warning by the suffering of others, to sit loose to the world, and so to number our days, as to incline our hearts to the one thing needful! Indeed that one thing includes many things sufficient to engage the best of our thoughts and the most of our time, if we were duly sensible of their importance; but I may adopt the psalmist's expression, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." How is it that the truths of which I have the most undoubted conviction, and which are of all others the most weighty, should make so little impression upon me? O I know the cause! it is deeply rooted. An evil nature cleaves to me; so that when I would do good, evil is present with me. It is, however, a mercy to be made sensible of it, and in any measure humbled for it. Ere long it will be dropped in the grave; then all compliments shall cease. That thought gives relief. I shall not always live this poor dying life: I hope one day to be all ear, all heart, all tongue; when I shall see the Redeemer as he is, I shall be like him. This will be a heaven indeed, to behold his glory without a vail, to rejoice in his love without a cloud, and to sing his praises, without one jarring or wandering note, for ever. In the mean time, may he enable us to serve him with our best. O that every power, faculty, and talent, were devoted to him! he deserves all we have, and ten thousand times more if we had it; for he has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. He gave himself for us. In one sense we are well suited to answer his purpose; for if we were not vile and worthless beyond expression, the exceeding riches of his grace would not have been so gloriously displayed. His glory shines more in redeeming one sinner, than in preserving a thousand angels. Poor Mr. —— is still in the dark valley, but we trust prayer shall yet bring him out. Mighty things have been done in answer to prayer; and the Lord's arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. It is our part to wait till we have an answer. One of his own hymns says,

> The promise may be long deferr'd,
> But never comes too late.

I suppose you have heard of the death of Mr. T—— of R——. This is apparently a heavy blow. He was an amiable, judicious, candid man, and an excellent preacher in a great sphere of usefulness; and his age and constitution gave hopes that he might have been eminently serviceable for many years. How often does the Lord write Vanity upon all our expectations from men. He visited a person ill of a putrid fever, and carried the seeds of infection with him to London, where he died. Mrs. —— is a very excellent and accomplished woman, but exceedingly delicate in her frame and spirits. How can she bear so sudden and severe a stroke! But yet I hope she will afford a proof of the Lord's all-sufficiency and faithfulness. O Madam, the Lord our God

is a great God! If he frowns, the smiles of the whole creation can afford no comfort; and if he is pleased to smile, he can enable the soul under the darkest dispensations to say, All is well. Yet the flesh will feel, and it ought: otherwise the exercise of faith, patience, and resignation, would be impracticable. I have lost in him one of my most valued and valuable friends; but what is my loss to that of his people?

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord increase you more and more, you and your children. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you his peace. I thank him for leading you to us, but especially for making your visit there in any measure agreeable and profitable to yourself. If I have been an instrument in his hand for your comfort, I have reason to remember it among the greatest favours he has conferred upon me. And now, dear Madam, once more farewell. If the Lord spares our lives, I hope we shall see each other again upon earth. But above all, let us rejoice in the blessed gospel, by which immortality is brought to light, and a glorious prospect opened beyond the grave.

> There sits our Saviour thron'd in light,
> Cloth'd with a body like our own.

There at least, after all the changes and trials of this state, we shall meet to part no more.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

—— 1775.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I SHOULD have been more uneasy at being prevented writing immediately, had I any reason to apprehend my advice necessary upon the point you propose, which, by this time, I suppose is settled as it should be without me. I smiled at Miss M——'s disappointment. However, if the Lord favours her with a taste for the library of my proposing, she will be like the merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, and will count all other books but pebbles in comparison of those four volumes, which present us with something new and important whenever we look into them. I shall be much obliged to her if she will commit the third chapter of Proverbs to her memory, and I shall pray the Lord to write it in her heart.

You surprise me when you tell me, the incident of my birth-day was noticed by those I never saw. Be so good as to return my thanks to my unknown friends, and tell them, that I pray our common Lord and Saviour to bless them abundantly. His people while here are scattered abroad, separated by hills and rivers, and too often by names and prejudices; but by and bye we shall all meet, where we shall all know and acknowledge each other, and rejoice together for evermore. I have lately read with much pleasure, and I hope with some profit, the history of the Greenland Mission. Upon the whole, it is a glorious work. None who love the Lord will refuse to say, it is the finger of God indeed. For my own part, my soul rejoices in it: and I honour the instruments, as men who have hazarded their lives in an extraordinary manner for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Sure I am that none could have sustained such discouragements at first, or have obtained such success afterwards, unless the Lord had sent, supported, and owned them.

I hope we shall have an interest in your prayers. I trust the Lord is yet with us. We have some ripe for the sickle, and some just springing up; some tokens of his gracious presence amongst us; but sin and Satan cut us out abundance of work as individuals, though, through mercy as a society, we walk in peace.

The toad and spider is an exhibition of my daily experience. I am often wounded, but the Lord is my health: still I am a living monument of mercy; and I trust that word, "Because I live, you shall live also," will carry me to the end. I am poor, weak, and foolish; but Jesus is wise, strong, and abounding in grace. He has given me a desire to trust my all in his hands, and he will not disappoint the expectation which he himself has raised. At present I have but little to say, and but little time to say it in. When you think of this place, I hope you will think and believe, that you have friends here most cordially interested in your welfare, and often remembering you in prayer. May the Lord be your guide and shield, and give you the best desires of your heart. I pray him to establish and settle you in the great truths of his word. I trust he will. We learn more, and more effectually, by one minute's communication with him through the medium of his written word, than we could from an assembly of divines, or a library of books.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

August —, 1775.

MY DEAR MADAM,

IT is not owing to forgetfulness that your letter has been thus long unanswered. It has lain within my view this fortnight, demanding my first leisure hour; but affairs of daily occurrence have been so many and so pressing, that I have been constrained to put it off till now. I trust the Lord, by his Spirit and providence, will direct and prosper the settlement of your children. I desire my love to Miss M——. My idea of her enlarges. Methinks

I see her aspiring to be as tall as her mamma. I hope likewise that she increases in grace and wisdom as in years and stature; and that hearing our Lord's flock is a little flock, she feels an earnest thirst to be one of the happy number which constitutes his fold.

There the Lord dwells amongst them upon his own hill,
With the flocks all around him, a-waiting his will.

If she has such a desire, I can tell who gave it her, for I am persuaded it was not born with her: and where the good husbandman sows, there will he also reap. Therefore, dear Miss M——, press forward: knock and it shall be opened unto you, for yet there is room. O what a fold! O what a pasture! O what a shepherd! Let us love, and sing, and wonder.

I hope the good people at Bristol, and everywhere else, are praying for our sinful, distracted land, in this dark day. The Lord is angry, the sword is drawn, and I am afraid nothing but the spirit of wrestling prayer can prevail for the returning it into the scabbard. Could things have proceeded to these extremities, except the Lord had withdrawn his salutary blessing from both sides? It is a time of prayer. We see the beginning of trouble, but who can foresee the possible consequences? The fire is kindled, but how far it may spread, those who are above may perhaps know better than we. I meddle not with the disputes of party, nor concern myself about any political maxims, but such as are laid down in scripture. There I read, that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is the reproach, and if persisted in, the ruin of any people. Some people are startled at the enormous sum of our national debt: they who understand spiritual arithmetic, may well be startled if they sit down and compute the debt of national sin. *Imprimis*, Infidelity; *Item*, Contempt of the gospel; *Item*, The profligacy of manners; *Item*, Perjury; *Item*, The cry of blood, the blood of thousands, perhaps millions, from the East Indies. It would take sheets, yea quires, to draw out the particulars under each of these heads, and then much would remain untold. What can we answer, when the Lord saith, "Shall not I visit for these things? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Since we received the news of the first hostilities in America, we have had an additional prayer-meeting. Could I hear that professors in general, instead of wasting their breath in censuring men and measures, were plying the throne of grace, I should still hope for a respite. Poor New England! once the glory of the earth, now likely to be visited with fire and sword! They have left their first love, and the Lord is sorely contending with them. Yet surely their sins as a people are not to be compared with ours. I am just so much affected with these things, as to know that I am not affected enough. Oh! my spirit is sadly cold and insensible, or I should lay them to heart in a different manner; yet I endeavour to give the alarm as far as I can. There is one political maxim which comforts me, "The Lord reigns." His hand guides the storm; and he knows them that are his, how to protect, support, and deliver them. He will take care of his own cause, yea, he will extend his kingdom, even by these formidable methods. Men have one thing in view, he has another, and his counsel shall stand.

The chief piece of news since my last is concerning B. A. She has finished her course, and is now with the great multitude who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony. Tuesday, the 1st of February, she was in our assembly, was taken ill the next day, and died while we were assembled the Tuesday following. She had an easy dissolution, retained her senses and her speech to the last minute, and went without a struggle or a sigh. She was not in raptures during her illness, but was composed, and maintained a strong and lively faith. She had a numerous levee about her bed daily, who were all witnesses to the power of faith, and to the faithfulness of the Lord, enabling her to triumph over the approaches of death; for she was well known and well respected. She will be much missed; but I hope he will answer the many prayers she put up for us, and raise up others in her room. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Blessed are they who know whom they have believed, and when death comes, can cheerfully rest their hopes on him who died that we might live. B—— had been long a precious and honourable woman; but her hope in the trying hour rested not in what she had done for the Lord, but upon what he had done for her; not upon the change his grace had wrought in her, but upon the righteousness he had wrought out for her by his obedience unto death. This supported her, for she saw nothing in herself but what she was ashamed of. She saw reason to renounce her own goodness, as well as her own sins, as to the point of acceptance with God, and died, as St. Paul lived, determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

The time when Mr. and Mrs. C—— remove to Scotland drawing near, Mrs. —— is gone to spend a week or two with them, and take her leave. She feels something at parting with a sister, who is indeed a valuable person; and from children they have always lived in the most tender intimacy and uninterrupted friendship. But all beneath the moon (like the moon itself) is subject to incessant change. Alterations and separations are graciously appointed of the Lord, to remind us that this is not our rest, and to prepare our thoughts for that approaching change

which shall fix us for ever in an unchangeable state. O Madam! what shall we poor worms render to him who has brought life and immortality to life by the gospel, taken away the sting of death, revealed a glorious prospect beyond the grave, and given us eyes to see it? Now the reflection, that we must ere long take a final farewell of what is most capable of pleasing us upon earth, is not only tolerable, but pleasant. For we know we cannot fully possess our best friend, our chief treasure, till we have done with all below; nay, we cannot till then properly see each other. We are cased up in vehicles of clay, and converse together as if we were in different coaches, with the blinds close drawn round. We see the carriage, and the voice tells us that we have a friend within; but we shall know each other better, when death shall open the coach doors, and hand out the company successively, and lead them into the glorious apartments which the Lord has appointed to be the common residence of them that love him. What an assembly will there be! What a constellation of glory, when each individual shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father! No sins, sorrows, temptations; no vails, clouds, or prejudices, shall interrupt us then. All names of idle distinction (the fruits of present remaining darkness, the channels of bigotry, and the stumbling-block of the world) will be at an end.

The description you give of your present residence pleases me much, and chiefly because it describes and manifests to me something still more interesting, I mean the peaceable situation of your mind. Had he placed you in an Eden some months ago, it would hardly have awakened your descriptive talent. But he whom the wind and seas obey has calmed your mind, and I trust will go on to fill you with all joy and peace in believing. It is no great matter where we are, provided we see that the Lord has placed us there, and that he is with us.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

——— 1776.

So, my dear Madam, I hope we have found you out, and that this letter will reach you in good time to welcome you in our names to London. We are ready to take it for granted that you will now most certainly make us a visit. Do come as soon, and stay as long, as you possibly can. Methinks you will be glad to get out of the smell and noise as soon as possible. If we did not go to London now and then, we should perhaps forget how people live there. Especially I pity professors; they are exposed to as many dangers as people who live in mines; chilling damps, scorching blasts epidemical disorders, owing to the impure air. Such are the winds of false doctrines, the explosions of controversy, the blights of worldly conversation, the contagion of evil custom. In short, a person had need have a good constitution of grace, and likewise to be well supplied with antidotes, to preserve a tolerable share of spiritual health in such a situation.

And now, how shall I fill up the rest of the paper? It is a shame for a christian and a minister to say he has no subject at hand, when the inexhaustible theme of redeeming love is ever pressing upon our attention. I will tell you, then, though you know it, that the Lord reigns. He who once bore our sins, and carried our sorrows, is seated upon a throne of glory, and exercises all power in heaven and on earth. Thrones, principalities, and powers, bow before him. Every event in the kingdoms of providence and of grace are under his rule. His providence pervades and manages the whole, and is as minutely attentive to every part, as if there were only that single object in his view. From the highest archangel to the meanest ant or fly, all depend on him for their being, their preservation, and their powers. He directs the sparrows where to build their nests, and to find their food. He over-rules the rise and fall of nations, and bends, with an invincible energy and unerring wisdom, all events; so that, while many intend nothing less, in the issue their designs all concur and coincide in the accomplishment of his holy will. He restrains with a mighty hand the still more formidable efforts of the powers of darkness; and Satan, with all his hosts, cannot exert their malice a hair's breadth beyond the limits of his permission. This is he who is the head and husband of his believing people. How happy are they whom it is his good pleasure to bless! How safe are they whom he has engaged to protect! How honoured and privileged are they to whom he is pleased to manifest himself, and whom he enables and warrants to claim him as their friend and their portion! Having redeemed them by his own blood, he sets a high value upon them: he esteems them his treasure, his jewels, and keeps them as the pupil of his eye. They shall not want; they need not fear; his eye is upon them in every situation, his ear is open to their prayers, and his everlasting arms are under them for their sure support. On earth he guides their steps, controuls their enemies, and directs all his dispensations for their good; while in heaven, he is pleading their cause, preparing them a place, and communicating down to them the reviving foretastes of the glory that shall be shortly revealed. O how is this mystery hidden from an unbelieving world! Who can believe it, till it is made known by experience, what an intercourse is maintained in this land of shadows between the Lord of glory and sinful worms! How should we praise him,

that he has visited us; for we were once blind to his beauty, and insensible to his love, and should have remained so to the last, had he not prevented us with his goodness, and been found of us when we sought him not.

Mrs. —— presents her love. The bite of the leech which I mentioned to you has confined her to the house ever since; but I hope she will be able to go out to-morrow. We were for a while apprehensive of worse consequences; but the Lord is gracious: he shews us, in a variety of instances, what dependent creatures we are, how blind to events, and how easily the methods which we take to relieve ourselves from a small inconvenience may plunge us into a greater. Thus we learn (happy, indeed, if we can effectually learn it), that there is no safety but in his protection, and that nothing can do us good but by his blessing. As for myself, I see so many reasons why he might contend with me, that I am amazed he affords me and mine so much peace, and appoints us so few trials. We live as upon a field of battle; many are hourly suffering and falling around us, and I can give no reason why we are preserved, but that he is God, and not man. What a mercy that we are only truly known to him, who is alone able to bear us!

May the Lord bless you and yours; may he comfort you, guide you, and guard you. Come quickly to,

Yours, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND MR. B——.

LETTER I.

September 14, 1765.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

WHEN I was at London, in June last, your name first reached me, and from that time I have been desirous to wish you success in the name of the Lord. A few weeks ago, I received a farther account from Mrs. ——, with a volume of your sermons: she likewise gave me a direction where to write, and an encouragement that a letter would not be unacceptable. The latter, indeed, I did not much need, when I had read your book. Though we have no acquaintance, we are already united in the strictest ties of friendship, partakers of the same hope, servants of the same Lord, and in the same part of his vineyard: I therefore hold all apologies needless. I rejoice in the Lord's goodness to you; I pray for his abundant blessing upon your labours; I need an interest in your prayers: I have an affectionate desire to know more concerning you: these are my motives for writing.

Mrs. —— tells me that you have read my Narrative: I need not tell you, therefore, that I am one of the most astonishing instances of the forbearance and mercy of God upon the face of the earth. In the close of it, I mention a warm desire I had to the ministry: this the Lord was pleased to keep alive for several years, through a succession of views and disappointments. At length his hour came, and my way was made easy. I have been here about fifteen months. The Lord has led me, by a way that I little expected, to a pleasant lot, where the gospel has been many years known, and is highly valued by many. We have a large church and congregation, and a considerable number of lively thriving believers, and in general go on with great comfort and harmony. I meet with less opposition from the world than is usual where the gospel is preached. This burden was borne by Mr. B—— for ten years, and in that course of time, some of the fiercest opposers were removed, some wearied, and some softened; so that we are now remarkably quiet in that respect. May the Lord teach us to improve the privilege, and preserve us from indifference. How unspeakable are our obligations to the grace of God! What a privilege is it to be a believer! They are comparatively few, and we by nature were no nearer than others; it was grace, free grace, that made the difference. What an honour to be a minister of the everlasting gospel! These, upon comparison, are perhaps fewer still. How wonderful that one of these few should be sought for among the wilds of Africa, reclaimed from the lowest state of impiety and misery, and brought to assure other sinners, from his own experience, that "there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared." And you, Sir, though not left to give such flagrant proofs of the wickedness of the heart and the power of Satan, yet owe your present views to the same almighty grace. If the Lord had not distinguished you from your brethren, you would have been now in the character of a minister misleading the people, and opposing those precious truths you are now labouring to establish. Not unto us, O Lord! but unto thy name be the glory. I shall be thankful to hear from you at your leisure. Be pleased to inform me, whether you received the knowledge of the truth before or since you were in orders; how long you have preach-

ed the joyful sound of salvation by Jesus, and what is the state of things in your parts.

We are called to an honourable service, but it is arduous. What wisdom does it require to keep the middle path in doctrines, avoiding the equally dangerous errors on the right hand and the left! What steadiness, to speak the truth boldly and faithfully in the midst of a gainsaying world! What humility, to stand against the tide of popularity! What meekness, to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may be saved! "Who is sufficient for these things?" We are not in ourselves, but there is an all-sufficiency in Jesus. Our enemy watches us close; he challenges and desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat; he knows he can easily shake us, if we are left to ourselves; but we have a Shepherd, a Keeper, who never slumbers nor sleeps. If he permits us to be exercised, it is for our good; he is at hand to direct, moderate, and sanctify every dispensation; he has prayed for us, that our faith may not fail, and he has promised to maintain his fear in our hearts, that we may not depart from him. When we are prone to wander, he calls us back; when we say, My feet slip, his mercy holds us up; when we are wounded, he heals; when we are ready to faint, he revives. The people of God are sure to meet with enemies, but especially the ministers: Satan bears them a double grudge, the world watches for their halting, and the Lord will suffer them to be afflicted, that they may be kept humble, that they may acquire a sympathy with the sufferings of others, that they may be experimentally qualified to advise and help them, and to comfort them with the comforts with which they themselves have been comforted of God. But the Captain of our salvation is with us; his eye is upon us, his everlasting arms beneath us; in his name, therefore, we may go on, lift up our banners, and say, "If God be for us, who can be against us? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." The time is short: yet a little while, and he will wipe all tears from our eyes, and put a crown of life upon our head with his own gracious hand. In this sense, how beautiful are those lines:

———Temporis illius
Me consolor imagine;
Festis quum populus me reducem choris,
Faustisque excipiet vocibus, et Dei
Pompa cum celebri, me comitabitur
Augusta ad penetralia.
Buch. in Psal xlii.

If any occasions should call you into these parts, my house and pulpit will be glad to receive you. Pray for us, dear Sir, and believe me to be,

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

November 2, 1765.

VERY DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter of the 4th ult. gave me great pleasure. I thank you for the particular account you have favoured me with. I rejoice with you, sympathize with you, and find my heart opened to correspond with unreserved freedom. May the Lord direct our pens, and help us to help each other. The work you are engaged in is great, and your difficulties many; but faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it. The weapons which he has now put in your hands are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Men may fight, but they shall not prevail against us, if we are but enabled to put our cause simply into the Lord's hands, and keep steadily on in the path of duty. He will plead our cause, and fight our battles; he will pardon our mistakes, and teach us to do better. My experience as a minister is but small, having been but about eighteen months in the vineyard; but for about twelve years I have been favoured with an increasing acquaintance among the people of God, of various ranks and denominations, which, together with the painful exercises of my own heart, gave me opportunity of making observations which were of great use to me when I entered upon the work myself; and ever since, I have found the Lord graciously supplying new lights and new strength as new occurrences arise. So, I trust it will be with you. I endeavour to avail myself of the examples, advice, and sentiments of my brethren, yet at the same time to guard against calling any man master. This is the peculiar of Christ. The best are but men: the wisest may be mistaken; and that which may be right in another, may be wrong in me, through a difference of circumstances. The Spirit of God distributes variously, both in gifts and dispensations; and I would no more be tied to act strictly by others rules, than to walk in shoes of the same size. My shoes must fit my own feet.

I endeavour to guard against extremes; our nature is prone to them; and we are liable likewise, when we have found the inconvenience of one extreme, to revert insensibly (sometimes to fly suddenly) to the other. I pray to be led in the midst of the path. I am what they call a Calvinist; yet there are flights, niceties, and hard sayings, to be found among some of that system, which I do not chuse to imitate. I dislike those sentiments against which you have borne your testimony in the note at the end of your preface; but having known many precious souls in that party, I have been taught, that the kingdom of God is not in names and sentiments, but

in righteousness, faith, love, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. I should, however, upon some occasions, oppose those tenets, if they had any prevalence in my neighbourhood; but they have not; and in general, I believe, the surest way to refute or prevent error, is to preach the truth. I am glad to find you are aware of that spirit of enthusiasm which has so often broken loose and blemished hopeful beginnings, and that the foundation you build upon is solid and scriptural: this will, I hope, save you much trouble, and prevent many offences. Let us endeavour to make our people acquainted with the scriptures, and to impress them with a high sense of its authority, excellence, and sufficiency. Satan seldom remarkably imposes on ministers or people, except where the word of God is too little consulted or regarded. Another point in which I aim at a medium, is in what is called prudence. There is certainly such a thing as christian prudence, and a remarkable deficiency of it is highly inconvenient. But caution too often degenerates into cowardice; and if the fear of man, under the name of prudence, gets within our guard, like a chilling frost, it nips every thing in the bud. Those who trust the Lord, and act openly with an honest freedom and consistence, I observe, he generally bears them out, smoothes their way, and makes their enemies their friends, or at least restrains their rage; while such as halve things, temporise, and aim to please God and man together, meet with double disappointment, and are neither useful nor respected. If we trust to him, he will stand by us; if we regard men, he will leave us to make the best we can of them.

I have set down hastily what occured to my pen, not to dictate to you, but to tell you how I have been led, and because some expressions in your letter seemed to imply that you would not be displeased with me for so doing. As to books, I think there is a medium here likewise. I have read too much in time past; yet I do not wholly join with some of our brethren, who would restrain us entirely to the word of God. Undoubtedly this is the fountain; here we should dwell: but a moderate and judicious perusal of other authors may have its use; and I am glad to be beholden to such helps, either to explain what I do not understand, or to confirm me in what I do. Of these, the writings of the last age afford an immense variety.

But above all, may we, dear Sir, live and feed upon the precious promises, John xiv. 16, 17, 26. and xvi. 13—15. There is no teacher like Jesus, who, by his Holy Spirit, reveals himself in his word to the understanding and affections of his children. When we thus behold his glory in the gospel-glass, we are changed into the same image. Then our hearts melt, our eyes flow, our stammering tongues are unloosed. That this may be your increasing experience is the prayer of, dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

January 21, 1766.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letters give me the sincerest pleasure. Let us believe that we are daily thinking of and praying for each other, and write when opportunity offers without apologies. I praise the Lord he has led you so soon to a settled judgment in the leading truths of the gospel. For want of this, many have been necessitated with their own hands to pull down what, in the first warm emotions of their zeal, they had laboured hard to build. It is a mercy likewise, to be enabled to acknowledge what is excellent in the writings or conduct of others, without adopting their singularities, or discarding the whole on account of a few blemishes. We should be glad to receive instruction from all, and avoid being led by the *ipse dixit* of any. *Nullius jurare in verbum*, is a fit motto for those who have one master, even Christ. We may grow wise apace in opinions, by books and men; but vital, experimental knowledge, can only be received from the Holy Spirit, the great instructor, and comforter of his people. And there are two things observable in his teaching: 1. That he honours the means of his own appointment, so that we cannot expect to make any great progress without diligence on our parts. 2. That he does not teach all at once, but by degrees. Experience is his school; and by this I mean the observation and improvement of what passes within us and around us in the course of every day. The word of God affords a history in miniature of the heart of man, the devices of Satan, the state of the world, and the method of grace. And the most instructing and affecting commentary on it to an enlightened mind, may be gathered from what we see, feel, and hear, from day to day. *Res, ætas, usus, semper aliquid apportent novi;* and no knowledge in spiritual things but what we acquire in this way is properly our own, or will abide the time of trial. This is not always sufficiently considered: we are ready to expect that others should receive upon our word, in half an hour's time, those views of things which have cost us years to attain. But none can be brought forward faster than the Lord is pleased to communicate inward light Upon this ground controversies have been multiplied among christians to little purpose, for plants of different standings will be *(ceteris paribus)* in different degrees of forwardness. A young christian is like a green fruit; it has perhaps a disagreeable austerity, which

cannot be corrected out of its proper course; it wants time and growth: wait a while, and by the nourishment it receives from the root, together with the action of the sun, wind, and rain, in succession from without, it will insensibly acquire that flavour and maturity, for the want of which an unskilful judge would be ready to reject it as nothing worth. We are favoured with many excellent books in our tongue; but I, with you, agree in assigning one of the first places, as a teacher, to Dr. Owen. I have just finished his discourse on the Holy Spirit, which is an epitome, if not the master-piece, of his writings. I should be glad to see the re-publication you speak of: but I question if the booksellers will venture upon it. I shall perhaps mention it to my London friends. As to archbishop Leighton, besides his select works, there are two octavo volumes published at Edinburgh, in the year 1748, and since reprinted at London. They contain a valuable commentary on St. Peter's First Epistle, and lectures on Isa. vi.; Psal. xxxix., cxxx.; Rom. iv. and a part of chap. xii. I have likewise a small quarto in Latin, of his Divinity Lectures, when professor at Edinburgh; the short title is, *Prælectiones Theologiæ*. Mine was printed in London, 1698. I believe this book is scarce, I set the highest value upon it. He has wonderfully united the simplicity of the gospel, with all the captivating beauties of style and language. Bishop Burnet says, he was the greatest master of the Latin tongue he ever knew, of which, together with his compass of learning, he has given proof in his lectures: yet in his gayer dress, his eminent humility and spirituality appear to no less advantage than when clad in plain English. I think it may be said to be a diamond set in gold. I could wish it translated, if it was possible (which I almost question) to preserve the beauty and spirit of the original.

Edwards on Free-will I have read with pleasure, as a good answer to the proud reasoners in their own way; but a book of that sort cannot be generally read: where the subject-matter is unpleasing, and the method of treating it requires more attention than the Athenian spirit of the times will bear, I wonder not if it is uncalled for, and am afraid we shall not see him upon Original Sin, if it depends upon the sale of the other. His answer to Dr. Taylor, which you speak of, is not a MS. but has been already printed at Boston.

You send us good news indeed, that two more of your brethren are declaring on the gospel side. The Lord confirm and strengthen them, add yet to your numbers, and make you helps and comforts to each other. Surely he is about to spread his work. Happy those whom he honours to be fellow-workers with him. Let us account the disgrace we suffer for his name's sake to be our great honour. Many will be against us, but there are more for us. All the praying souls on earth, al. the glorified saints in heaven, all the angels of God, yea the God of angels himself, all are on our side. Satan may rage, but he is a chained enemy. Men may contradict and fight, but they cannot prevail. Two things we shall especially need, courage and patience, that we neither faint before them, nor upon any provocation act in their spirit. If we can pity and pray for them, return good for evil, make them sensible that we bear them a hearty good-will, and act as the disciples of him who wept for his enemies and prayed for his murderers; in this way we shall find the Lord will plead our cause, soften opposers, and by degrees give us a measure of outward peace. Warmth and imprudence have often added to the necessary burden of the cross. I rejoice that the Lord has led you in a different way, and I hope your doctrine and example will make your path smoother every day: you find it so in part already. As the Lord brings you out a people witnesses for you to the truth of his word, you will find advantage in bringing them often together. The interval from Sabbath to Sabbath is a good while, and affords time for the world and Satan to creep in. Intermediate meetings for prayer, &c. when properly conducted, are greatly useful. I could wish for larger sheets and longer leisure, but I am constrained to say adieu, in our dear Lord and Saviour

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

December 12, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

THIS is not intended as an answer to your last acceptable letter, but an occasional line, in consequence of the account Mr. T— has given me of your late illness. I trust this dispensation will be useful to you, and I wish the knowledge of it may be so to me. I am favoured with an unusual share of health and an equal flow of spirits. If the blow you have received should be a warning to me, I shall have cause to be thankful. I am glad to hear you are better: I hope the Lord has no design to disable you from service, but rather (as he did Jacob) to strengthen you by wounding you; to maintain and increase in you that conviction which, through grace, you have received, of the vanity and uncertainty of every thing below; to give you a lively sense of the value of health and opportunities, and to add to the treasury of your experience new proofs of his power and goodness in supporting, comforting, and healing you, and likewise to quicken the prayers of your people for you, and to stir them up to use double diligence in the present improvement of the means of grace, while by

this late instance they see how soon and suddenly you might have been removed from them.

I understand you did not feel that lively exercise of faith and joy which you would have hoped to have found at such a season; but let not this discourage you from a firm confidence that, when the hour of dismission shall come, the Lord will be faithful to his gracious promise, and give you strength sufficient to encounter and vanquish your last enemy. You had not this strength lately, because you needed it not; for, though you might think yourself near to death, the Lord intended to restore you, and he permitted you to feel weakness, that you might know your strength does not consist in grace received, but in his fulness, and his promise to communicate from himself as your occasions require. O, it is a great thing to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus! but it is a hard lesson: it is not easy to understand it in theory, but when the Lord has taught us so far, it is still more difficult to reduce our knowledge to practice. But this is one end he has in view in permitting us to pass through such a variety of inward and outward exercises, that we may cease from trusting in ourselves, or in any creature, or frame, or experiences, and be brought to a state of submission and dependence upon him alone. I was once visited something in the same way, seized with a fit of the apoplectic kind, which held me near an hour, and left a disorder in my head, which quite broke the scheme of life I was then in, and was consequently one of the means the Lord appointed to bring me into the ministry; but I soon perfectly recovered. From the remembrance Mrs. —— has of what she then suffered, she knows how to sympathize with Mrs. B—— in her share of your trial. And I think dear Mr. —— some years since had a sudden stroke on a Christmas day, which disabled him from duty for a time. To him and to me these turns were only like the caution which Philip of Macedon ordered to be repeated to him every morning, "Remember thou art a man." I hope it will be no more to you, but that you shall live to praise him, and to give many cause to praise him on your behalf. Blessed be God we are in safe hands: the Lord himself is our keeper; nothing befals us but what is adjusted by his wisdom and love. Health is his gift, and sickness, when sanctified is a token of love likewise. Here we may meet with many things which are not joyous but grievous to the flesh; but he will, in one way or other, sweeten every bitter cup, and ere long he will wipe away all tears from our eyes. O that joy, that crown, that glory which awaits the believer! Let us keep the prize of our high calling in view, and press forward in the name of Jesus the Redeemer, and he will not disappoint our hopes.

I am but just come off from a journey, am weary, and it grows late; I must therefore break off. When you have leisure and strength to write, oblige me with a confirmation of your recovery, for I shall be something anxious about you.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

March 14, 1775.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I THOUGHT you long in writing, but am afraid I have been longer. A heavy family affliction called me from home in December, which put me out of my usual course, and threw me behind-hand in my correspondence; yet I did not suspect the date of your last letter was so old by two months as I find it. Whether I write more frequently or more seldom, the love of my heart to you is the same, and I shall believe the like of you; yet, if it can be helped, I hope the interval will not be so long again on either side. I am glad that the Lord's work still flourishes in your parts, and that you have a more comfortable prospect at home than formerly; and I was pleased with the acceptance you found at S———, which I hope will be an earnest of greater things. I think affairs in general, with respect to this land, have a dark appearance; but it is comfortable to observe, that, amidst the aboundings of iniquity, the Lord is spreading his gospel, and that though many oppose, yet in most places whither the word is sent, great numbers seem disposed to hear. I am going (if the Lord please) into Leicestershire on Friday. This was lately such a dark place as you describe your country to be, and much of it is so still; but the Lord has visited three of the principal towns with gospel-light. I have a desire of visiting these brethren in the vineyard, to bear my poor testimony to the truths they preach, and to catch, if I may, a little fire and fervour among them. I do not often go abroad; but I have found a little excursion now and then (when the way is made plain) has its advantages, to quicken the spirits and enlarge the sphere of observation. On these accounts the recollection of my N—— journey gives me pleasure to this day; and very glad should I be to repeat it, but the distance is so great that I consider it rather as desirable than practicable.

My experiences vary as well as yours: but possibly your sensations, both of the sweet and of the bitter, may be stronger than mine. The enemy assaults me more by sap than storm, and I am ready to think I suffer more by languor than some of my friends do by the sharper conflicts to which they are called. So likewise in these seasons, which comparatively I call my best hours, my sensible com-

forts are far from lively. But I am in general enabled to hold fast my confidence, and to venture myself upon the power, faithfulness, and compassion of that adorable Saviour, to whom my soul has been directed and encouraged to flee for refuge. I am a poor, changeable, inconsistent creature; but he deals graciously with me; he does not leave me wholly to myself; but I have such daily proofs of the malignity and efficacy of the sin that dwelleth in me, as ought to cover me with shame and confusion of face and make me thankful if I am permitted to rank with the meanest of those who sit at his feet. That I was ever called to the knowledge of his salvation, was a singular instance of his sovereign grace; and that I am still preserved in the way, in defiance of all that has arisen from within and from without to turn me aside, must be wholly ascribed to the same sovereignty: and if, as I trust, he shall be pleased to make me a conqueror at last, I shall have peculiar reason to say, Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory and the praise!

> How oft have sin and Satan strove
> To rend my soul from thee, my God!
> But everlasting is thy love,
> And Jesus seals it with his blood.

The Lord leads me in the course of my preaching to insist much on a life of communion with himself, and of the great design of the gospel to render us conformable to him in love; and as by his mercy nothing appears in my outward conduct remarkably to contradict what I say, many who only can judge by what they see, suppose I live a very happy life. But, alas! if they knew what passes in my heart, how dull my spirit is in secret, and how little I am myself affected by the glorious truths I propose to others, they would form a different judgment. Could I be myself what I recommend to them, I should be happy indeed. Pray for me, my dear friend, that now the Lord is bringing forward the pleasing spring, he may favour me with a spring-season in my soul; for indeed I mourn under a long winter.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

April 16, 1772.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HOPE the Lord has contracted my desires and aims almost to the one point of study, the knowledge of his truth. All other acquisitions are transient and comparatively vain. And yet, alas! I am a slow scholar; nor can I see in what respect I get forward, unless that every day I am more confirmed in the conviction of my own emptiness and inability to all spiritual good. And as, notwithstanding this, I am still enabled to stand my ground, I would hope, since no effect can be without an adequate cause, that I have made some advance, though in a manner imperceptible to myself, towards a more simple dependence upon Jesus as my all in all. It is given me to thirst and to taste, if it is not given me to drink abundantly; and I would be thankful for the desire. I see and approve the wisdom, grace, suitableness, and sufficiency of the gospel-salvation; and since it is for sinners, and I am a sinner, and the promises are open, I do not hesitate to call it mine. I am a weary, laden soul; Jesus has invited me to come, and has enabled me to put my trust in him. I seldom have an uneasy doubt, at least not of any continuance, respecting my pardon, acceptance, and interest in all the blessings of the New Testament. And, amidst a thousand infirmities and evils under which I groan, I have the testimony of my conscience when under the trial of his word, that my desire is sincerely towards him, that I choose no other portion, that I allowedly serve no other master. When I told our friend —— lately to this purpose, he wondered and asked, "How is it possible that if you can say these things, you should not be always rejoicing?" Undoubtedly I derive from the gospel a peace at bottom which is worth more than a thousand worlds; but so it is, I can only speak for myself, though I rest and live upon the truths of the gospel, they seldom impress me with a warm and lively joy. In public, indeed, I sometimes seem in earnest and much affected, but even then it appears to me rather as a part of the gift intrusted to me for the edification of others, than as a sensation which is properly my own. For when I am in private, I am usually dull and stupid to a strange degree, or the prey to a wild and ungoverned imagination; so that I may truly say, when I would do good, evil, horrid evil, is present with me. Ah, how different is this from sensible comfort! and if I was to compare myself with others, to make their experience my standard, and was not helped to retreat to the sure word of God as my refuge, how hard should I find it to maintain a hope that I had either part or lot in the matter. What I call my good times are, when I can find my attention in some little measure fixed to what I am about, which, indeed, is not always nor frequently my case in prayer, and still seldomer in reading the scriptures. My judgment embraces these means as blessed privileges, and Satan has not prevailed to drive me from them; but in the performance, I too often find them tasks, feel a reluctance when the seasons return and am glad when they are finished. O what a mystery is the heart of man! What a warfare is the life of faith, at least in the path the Lord is pleased to lead me! What reason have I to lie in the dust as the chief of sinners!

and what cause for thankfulness that salvation is wholly of grace. Notwithstanding all my complaints, it is still true that Jesus died and rose again, that he ever liveth to make intercession, and is able to save to the uttermost. But, on the other hand, to think of that joy of heart in which some of his people live, and to compare it with that apparent deadness and want of spirituality which I feel, this makes me mourn. However, I think there is a scriptural distinction between faith and feeling, grace and comfort; they are not inseparable, and perhaps when together, the degree of the one is not often the just measure of the other. But though I pray that I may be ever longing and panting for the light of his countenance, yet I would be so far satisfied, as to believe the Lord has wise and merciful reasons for keeping me so short of the comforts which he has taught me to desire and value more than the light of the sun.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND Mr. R———.

LETTER I.

January 16, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

It is true, I was apprehensive from your silence that I had offended you; but when your letter came, it made me full amends; and now I am glad I wrote as I did, though I am persuaded I shall never write to you again in the same strain. I am pleased with the spirit you discover; and your bearing so well to be told of the mistakes I pointed out to you, endears you more to me than if you had not made them. Henceforward I can converse freely with you, and shall be glad when I have the opportunity.

As to your view of justification, I did not oppose it; I judge for myself, and I am willing others should have the same liberty. If we hold the Head, and love the Lord, we agree in him, and I should think my time ill employed in disputing the point with you. I only meant to except against the positive manner in which you had expressed yourself. My end is answered, and I am satisfied. Indeed, I believe the difference between a *judicious* Supra-lapsarian, and a *sound* Sub-lapsarian, lies more in a different way of expressing their sentiments than is generally thought. At the close of Halyburton's Insufficiency of Natural Religion, he has an Inquiry into the Nature of Regeneration and Justification, wherein he promises a scheme, in which, if I mistake not, the moderate of both parties might safely unite. I have used the epithets *judicious* and *sound*, because, as I acknowledge, some of the one side are not quite *sound*, so I think some on the other side are not so *judicious* as I could wish; that is, I think they do not sufficiently advert to the present state of human nature, and the danger which may arise from leading those who are weak in faith and judgment, into inquiries and distinctions, evidently beyond the line of their experience, and which may be hurtful; because, admitting them to be true when properly explained, they are very liable to be misunderstood. To say nothing of Hr. Hussey (in whose provisions I have frequently found more bones than meat, and seasoned with much of an angry and self-important spirit), I have observed passages in other writers, for whom I have a higher esteem, which, to say the least, appear to me paradoxical, and hard to be understood; though, perhaps, I can give my consent to them, if I had such restrictions and limitations as the authors would not refuse. But plain people are easily puzzled. And though I know several in the Supra-lapsarian scheme, at whose feet I am willing to sit and learn, and have found their preaching and conversation savoury and edifying; yet I must say, I have met with many, who have appeared to be rather wise than warm, rather positive than humble, rather captious than lively, and more disposed to talk of speculations than experience. However, let us give ourselves to the study of the word and to prayer: and may the great Teacher make every scriptural truth food to our souls. I desire to grow in knowledge, but I want nothing which bears that name, that has not a direct tendency to make sin more hateful, Jesus more precious to my soul; and at the same time to animate me to a diligent use of every appointed means, and an unreserved regard to every branch of duty. I think the Lord has shewn me in a measure, there is a consistent sense running through the whole scriptures, and I desire to be governed and influenced by it all: doctrines, precepts, promises, warnings, all have their proper place and use; and I think many of the inconveniencies which obtain in the present day, spring from separating those things which God hath joined together, and

insisting on some parts of the word of God, almost to the exclusion of the rest.

I have filled my paper with what I did not intend to say a word of when I began, and I must leave other things which were more upon my mind for another season. I thank you for saying you pray for me. Continue that kindness; I both need it and prize it.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

July 31, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your sorrowful epistle yesterday, and in order to encourage you to write, I answer it to-day.

The ship was safe when Christ was in her, though he was really asleep. At present I can tell you good news, though you know it; he is wide awake, and his eyes are in every place. You and I, if we could be pounded together, might perhaps make two tolerable ones. You are too anxious, and I am too easy in some respects. Indeed, I cannot be too easy, when I have a right thought that all is safe in his hands; but if your anxiety makes you pray, and my composure makes me careless, you have certainly the best of it. However, the ark is fixed upon an immoveable foundation; and if we think we see it totter, it is owing to a swimming in our heads. Seriously, the times look dark and stormy, and call for much circumspection and prayer; but let us not forget that we have an infallible pilot, and that the power, and wisdom, and honour of God, are embarked with us. At Venice they have a fine vessel, called the Bucentaur, in which, on a certain day of the year, the Doge and nobles embark, and go a little way to sea, to repeat the foolish ceremony of marriage between the Republic and the Adriatic (in consequence of some lying, antiquated Pope's bull, by which the banns of matrimony between Venice and the Gulf were published in the dark ages), when, they say, a gold ring is very gravely thrown overboard. Upon this occasion, I have been told, when the honour and government of Venice are shipped on board the Bucentaur, the pilot is obliged by his office to take an oath, that he will bring the vessel safely back again, in defiance of wind and weather. Vain mortals! If this be true, what an instance of God's long-suffering is it, that they have never yet sunk as lead in the mighty waters! But my story will probably remind you, that Jesus has actually entered into such an engagement in behalf of his church. And well he may, for both wind and weather are at his command; and he can turn the storm into a calm in a moment. We may therefore safely and confidently leave the government upon his shoulders. Duty is our part, the care is his.

A revival is wanted with us as well as with you, and I trust some of us are longing for it. We are praying and singing for one; and I send you, on the other side, a hymn, that you (if you like it) may sing with us. Let us take courage; though it may seem marvellous in our eyes, it is not so in the Lord's. He changes the desert into a fruitful field, and bids dry bones live. And if he prepare our hearts to pray, he will surely incline his ear to hear.

The miscarriages of professors are grievous; yet such things must be; how else could the scriptures be fulfilled? But there is one who is able to keep us from falling. Some who have distressed us, perhaps never were truly changed; how then could they stand? We see only the outside. Others who are sincere are permitted to fall for our instruction, that we may not be high-minded, but fear. However, he that walketh humbly, walketh surely.

Believe me, &c.

LETTER III.

February 22, 1774.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter by last post surprised and grieved me. We knew nothing of the subject, though Mrs. ——— remembers, when ——— was here, a hint or two were dropped which she did not understand, but no name was mentioned.

This instance shews the danger of leaning to impressions. Texts of scripture, brought powerfully to the heart, are very desirable and pleasant, if their tendency is to humble us, to give us a more feeling sense of the preciousness of Christ, or of the doctrines of grace, if they make sin more hateful, enliven our regard to the means, or increase our confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. But if they are understood as intimating our path of duty in particular circumstances, or confirming us in purposes we may have already formed, not otherwise clearly warranted by the general strain of the word, or by the leadings of Providence, they are for the most part ensnaring, and always to be suspected. Nor does their coming into the mind at the time of prayer give them more authority in this respect. When the mind is intent upon any subject the imagination is often watchful to catch at any thing which may seem to countenance the favourite pursuit. It is too common to ask counsel of the Lord when we have already secretly determined for ourselves; and in this disposition we may easily be deceived by the sound of a text of scripture, which, detached from the passage in which it stands,

may seem remarkably to tally with our wishes. Many have been deceived this way; and sometimes, when the event has shewn them they were mistaken, it has opened a door for great distress, and Satan has found occasion to make them doubt even of their most solid experiences.

I have sometimes talked to ——— upon this subject, though without the least suspicion of any thing like what has happened. As to the present case, it may remind us all of our weakness. I would recommend prayer, patience, much tenderness towards her, joined with faithful expostulation. Wait a little while, and I trust the Lord who loves her will break the snare: I am persuaded, in her better judgment, she would dread the t' oughts of doing wrong; and I hope and believe the good Shepherd, to whom she has often committed her soul and her ways, will interpose to restore and set her to rights. - I am sorry you think any of whom you have hoped well are going back; but be not discouraged. I say again, pray and wait, and hope the best. It is common for young professors to have a slack time; it is almost necessary, that they may be more sensible of the weakness and deceitfulness of their hearts, and be more humbled in future, when the Lord shall have healed their breaches, and restored their souls. We join in love to you and yours. Pray for us.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

February 3, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

It would be wrong to make you wait long for an answer to the point you propose in your last. It is an important one. I am not a casuist by profession, but I will do my best. Suppose I imitate your laconic manner of stating the question and circumstances.

I doubt not but it is very lawful at your age to think of marriage, and, in the situation you describe, to think of money likewise. I am glad you have no person, as you say, fixedly in view; in that case advice comes a post or two too late. But your expression seems to intimate that there is one transiently in view. If it be so, since you have no settlement, if she has no money, I cannot but wish she may pass on till she is out of sight and out of mind. I see this will not do; I must get into my own grave way about this grave business. I take it for granted that my friend is free from the love of filthy lucre, and that money will never be the turning point with you in the choice of a wife. Methinks I hear you think, if I wanted money, I would either dig or beg for it; but to preach or marry for money, that be far from me. I commend you. However, though the love of money be a great evil, money itself, obtained in a fair and honourable way, is desirable upon many accounts, though not for its own sake. Meat, clothes, fire, and books, cannot easily be had without it; therefore, if these be necessary, money, which procures them, must be a necessary likewise. If things were otherwise than you represent them, if you were able to provide for a wife yourself, then I would say, Find a gracious girl (if she be not found already), whose person you like, whose temper you think will suit, and then, with your father and mother's consent (without which I think you would be unwilling to move), thank the Lord for her, marry her, and account her a valuable portion, though she should not have a shilling. But, while you are without income or settlement, if you have thoughts of marriage, I hope they will be regulated by a due regard to consequences. They who set the least value upon money have in some respects the most need of it. A generous mind will feel a thousand pangs in straitening circumstances, which some unfeeling hearts would not be sensible of. You could perhaps endure hardships alone, yet it might pinch you to the very bone to see the person you love exposed to them. Besides, you might have a John, a Thomas, and a William, and perhaps half a dozen more to feed (for they must all eat); and how this could be done without a competency on one side or the other, or so much on both sides as will make a competency when united, I see not. Besides, you would be grieved not to find an occasional shilling in your pocket to bestow upon one or other of the Lord's poor, though you should be able to make some sort of a shift for those of your own house.

But is it not written, "The Lord will provide?" It is; but it is written again, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Hastily to plunge ourselves into difficulties upon a persuasion that he will find some way to extricate us, seems to me a species of tempting him.

Therefore I judge, it is so far lawful for you to have a regard to money in looking out for a wife, that it would be wrong, that is, in other words, unlawful for you to omit it, supposing you have a purpose of marrying in your present situation.

Many serious young women have a predilection in favour of a minister of the gospel; and I believe among such one or more may be found as spiritual, as amiable, as suitable to make you a good wife, with a tolerable fortune to boot, as another who has not a penny. If you are not willing to trust your own judgment in the search, entreat the Lord to find her for you. He chose well for Isaac and Jacob; and you, as a believer, have warrant

to commit your way to him, and many more express promises than they had for your encouragement. He knows your state, your wants, what you are at present, and what use he designs to make of you. Trust in him, and wait for him; prayer and faith, and patience, are never disappointed. I commend you to his blessing and guidance. Remember us to all in your house.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

May 28, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - You must not expect a long letter this morning; we are just going to court, in hopes of seeing the King, for he has promised to meet us. We can say he is mindful of his promises; and yet is it not strange, that though we are all in the same place, and the King in the midst of us, it is but here and there one (even of those who love him) can see him at once! However, in our turns, we are all favoured with a glimpse of him, and have had cause to say, How great is his goodness! How great is his beauty! We have the advantage of the queen of Sheba, a more glorious object to behold, and not so far to go for the sight of it. If a transient glance exceeds all that the world can afford for a long continuance, what must it be to dwell with him! If a day in his courts be better than a thousand, what will eternity be in his presence! I hope the more you see, the more you love; the more you drink, the more you thirst; the more you do for him, the more you are ashamed you can do so little; and that the nearer you approach to your journey's end, the more your pace is quickened. Surely the power of spiritual attraction should increase as the distance lessens. O that heavenly load-stone! may it so draw us, that we may not creep, but run. In common travelling, the strongest become weary, if the journey be very long; but in the spiritual journey, we are encouraged with a hope of going on from strength to strength. *Instaurabit iter vires*, as Johnson expresses it. No road but the road to heaven can thus communicate refreshment to those who walk in it, and make them more fresh and lively when they are just finishing their course, than when they first set out.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

April 18, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

ARE you sick, or lame of your right hand, or are you busy in preparing a folio for the press, that I hear nothing from you? You see, by the excuses I would contrive, I am not willing to suppose you have forgotten me, but that your silence is rather owing to a *cannot* than a *will not*.

I hope your soul prospers. I do not ask you, if you are always filled with sensible comfort: but do you find your spirit more bowed down to the feet and will of Jesus, so as to be willing to serve him for the sake of serving him, and to follow him, as we say, through thick and thin; to be willing to be any thing or nothing, so that he may be glorified? I could give you plenty of good advice upon this head; but I am ashamed to do it, because I so poorly follow it myself. I want to live with him by the day, to do all for him, to receive all from him, to possess all in him, to live all to him, to make him my hiding-place and my resting-place. I want to deliver up that rebel self to him in chains; but the rogue, like Proteus, puts on so many forms, that he slips through my fingers: but I think I know what I would do, if I could fairly catch him.

My soul is like a besieged city; a legion of enemies without the gates, and a nest of restless traitors within, that hold a correspondence with them without; so that I am deceived and counteracted continually. It is a mercy that I have not been surprised and overwhelmed long ago; without help from on high, it would soon be over with me. How often have I been forced to cry out, O God, the heathen are got into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled, and defaced all thy work! Indeed, it is a miracle that I still hold out. I trust, however, I shall be supported to the end, and that my Lord will at length raise the siege, and cause me to shout deliverance and victory.

Pray for me, that my walls may be strengthened, and wounds healed. We are all pretty well as to the outward man, and join in love to all friends.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

July 6, 1776.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS abroad when your letter came, but employ the first post to thank you for your confidence. My prayers (when I can pray) you may be sure of. As to advice, I see not that the

case requires much. Only be a quiet child, and lie patiently at the Lord's feet. He is the best friend and manager in these matters, for he has a key to open every heart - - - - - - - - - - - - - - I should not have taken Mr. Z———'s letter for a denial, as it seems you did. Considering the years of the parties, and other circumstances, a prudent parent could hardly say more, if he were inclined to favour your views. To me you seem to be in a tolerable fair way; but I know, in affairs of this kind, Mr. Self does not like suspense, but would willingly come to the point at once: but Mr. Faith, when he gets liberty to hold up his head, will own, that in order to make our temporal mercies wear well, and to give us a clearer sense of the hand that bestows them, a waiting and a praying time are very seasonable. Worldly people expect their schemes to run upon all-fours, as we say, and the objects of their wishes to drop into their mouths without difficulty; and if they succeed, they of course burn incense to their own drag, and say, This was my doing; but believers meet with rubs and disappointments, which convince them, that if they obtain any thing, it is the Lord must do it for them. For this reason, I observe, that he usually brings a death upon our prospects, even when it is his purpose to give us success in the issue. Thus we become more assured that we did not act in our own spirits, and have a more satisfactory view, that his providence has been concerned in filling up the rivers and removing the mountains that were in our way. Then, when he has given us our desire, how pleasant is it to look at it, and say, This I got not by my own sword, and my own bow, but I wrestled for it in prayer, I waited for it in faith, I put it into the Lord's hand, and from his hand I received it?

You have met with the story of one of our kings (if I mistake not), who wanted to send a nobleman abroad as his ambassador, and he desired to be excused on account of some affairs which required his presence at home: the king answered, "Do you take care of my business, and I will take care of yours." I would have you think the Lord says thus to you. You were sent into the world for a nobler end than to be pinned to a girl's apron-string; and yet, if the Lord sees it not good for you to be alone, he will provide you a help-mate. I say, if he sees the marriage-state best for you, he has the proper person already in his eye, and though she were in Peru or Nova Zembla, he knows how to bring you together. In the mean time, go thou and preach the gospel. Watch in all things; endure afflictions: do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of your ministry: and when other thoughts rise in your mind (for you have no door to shut them quite out), run with them to the throne of grace, and commit them to the Lord. Satan will perhaps try to force them upon you unseasonably and inordinately; but if he sees they drive you to prayer, he will probably desist, rather than be the occasion of doing you so much good. Believe likewise, that as the Lord has the appointment of the person, so he fixes the time. His time is like the time of the tide; all the art and power of man can neither hasten nor retard it a moment: it must be waited for; nothing can be done without it, and when it comes, nothing can resist it. It is unbelief that talks of delays; faith knows that properly there can be no such thing. The only reason why the Lord seems to delay what he afterwards grants, is, that the best hour is not yet come. I know you have been enabled to commit and resign your all to his disposal. You did well. May he help you to stand to the surrender. Sometimes he will put us to the trial, whether we mean what we say. He takes his course in a way we did not expect; and then, alas! how often does the trial put us to shame! Presently there is an outcry raised in the soul against his management; this is wrong, that unnecessary, the other has spoiled the whole plan: in short, all these things are against us. And then we go into the pulpit, and gravely tell the people how wise and how good he is; and preach submission to his will, not only as a duty, but a privilege. Alas! how deceitful is the heart! Yet, since it is, and will be so, it is necessary we should know it by experience. We have reason, however, to say, He is good and wise; for he bears with our perverseness, and in the event shews us, that if he had listened to our murmurings, and taken the methods we would have prescribed to him, we should have been ruined indeed, and that he has been all the while doing us good in spite of ourselves.

If I judge right, you will find your way providentially opened more and more; and yet it is possible, that when you begin to think yourself sure, something may happen to put you in a panic again. But a believer, like a sailor, is not to be surprised if the wind changes, but to learn the art of suiting himself to all winds for the time; and though many a poor sailor is shipwrecked, the poor believer shall gain his port. O, it is good sailing with an infallible pilot at the helm, who has the wind and weather at his command!

I have been much abroad, which of course puts things at sixes and sevens at home. If I did not love you well, I could not have spared so much of the only day I have had to myself for this fortnight past. But I was willing you should know that I think of you, and feel for you, if I cannot help you.

I have read Mr. ———'s book. Some things I think strongly argued; in some he has laid himself open to a blow, and I doubt not but he will have it. I expect answers, replies, rejoinders, &c. &c. and say, with

Leah, Gad, a troop cometh. How the wolf will grin to see the sheep and the shepherds biting and worrying one another! And well he may. He knows that contentions are a surer way to weaken the spirit of love, and stop the progress of the gospel, than his old stale method of fire and sword. Well, I trust we shall be of one heart and one mind when we get to heaven at last.

Let who will fight, I trust neither water nor fire shall set you and me at variance. We unite in love to you. The Lord is gracious to us, &c.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

—— 1776.

DEAR SIR,

I DO not often serve your letters so, but this last I burnt, believing you would like to have it out of danger of falling into improper hands. When I saw how eagerly the flames devoured the paper, how quickly and entirely every trace of the writing was consumed, I wished that the fire of the love of Jesus might as completely obliterate from your heart every uneasy impression which your disappointment has given you - - - - - - - - - - - - -

- Surely when he crosses our wishes, it is always in mercy, and because we short-sighted creatures often know not what we ask nor what would be the consequences if our desires were granted.

Your pride, it seems, has received a fall, by meeting a repulse. I know self does not like to be mortified in these affairs; but if you are made successful in wooing souls for Christ, I hope that will console you for meeting a rebuff when only wooing for yourself. Besides, I would have you pluck up your spirits. I have two good old proverbs at your service: "There is as good fish in the sea as any that are brought out of it:" and, "If one won't, another will, or wherefore serves the market?" Perhaps all your difficulties have arisen from this, that you have not yet seen the right person; if so, you have reason to be thankful that the Lord would not let you take the wrong, though you unwittingly would have done it if you could. Where the right one lies hid I know not, but upon a supposition that it will be good for you to marry, I may venture to say,

Ubi ubi est, diu celari non potest.

The Lord in his providence will disclose her, put her in your way, and give you to understand, This is she. Then you will find your business go forward with wheels and wings, and have cause to say, His choice and time were better than your own.

Did I not tell you formerly, that if you would take care of his business, he will take care of yours? I am of the same mind still. He will not suffer them who fear him and depend upon him to want any thing that is truly good for them. In the mean while, I advise you to take a lodging as near as you can to Gethsemane, and to walk daily to mount Golgotha, and borrow (which may be had for asking) that telescope which gives a prospect into the unseen world. A view of what is passing within the vail has a marvellous effect to compose our spirits, with regard to the little things that are daily passing here. Praise the Lord, who has enabled you to fix your supreme affection upon him, who is alone the proper and suitable object of it, and from whom you cannot meet a denial, or fear a change. He loved you first, and he will love you for ever; and if he be pleased to arise and smile upon you, you are in no more necessity of begging for happiness to the prettiest creature upon earth, than of the light of a candle on midsummer noon.

Upon the whole, I pray and hope the Lord will sweeten your cross, and either in kind or in kindness make you good amends. Wait, pray, and believe, and all shall be well. A cross we must have somewhere; and they who are favoured with health, plenty, peace, and a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, must have more causes for thankfulness than grief. Look round you, and take notice of the very severe afflictions which many of the Lord's own people are groaning under, and your trials will appear comparatively light. Our love to all friends.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

June 3, 1777.

DEAR SIR,

IT seems I must write something about the small-pox, but I know not well what; having had it myself, I cannot judge how I should feel if I were actually exposed to it. I am not a professed advocate for inoculation; but if a person who fears the Lord should tell me, "I think I can do it in faith, looking upon it as a salutary expedient, which he in his providence has discovered, and which, therefore, appears my duty to have recourse to, so that my mind does not hesitate with respect to the lawfulness, nor am I anxious about the event; being satisfied, that whether I live or die, I am in that path in which I can cheerfully expect his blessing," I do not know that I could offer a word by way of dissuasion.

If another person should say, "My times are in the Lord's hands; I am now in health, and am not willing to bring upon myself a disorder, the consequences of which I cannot

possibly foresee: If I am to have the small-pox, I believe he is the best judge of the season and manner in which I shall be visited, so as may be most for his glory and my own good: and therefore I chuse to wait his appointment, and not to rush upon even the possibility of danger without a call. If the very hairs of my head are numbered, I have no reason to fear, that, supposing I receive the small-pox in a natural way, I shall have a single pimple more than he sees expedient; and why should I wish to have one less? Nay, admitting, which, however, is not always the case, that inoculation might exempt me from some pain and inconvenience, and lessen the apparent danger, might it not likewise, upon that very account, prevent my receiving some of those sweet consolations, which I humbly hope my gracious Lord would afford me, if it were his pleasure to call me to a sharp trial. Perhaps the chief design of this trying hour if it comes, may be to shew me more of his wisdom, power, and love, than I have ever yet experienced. If I could devise a mean to avoid the trouble, I know not how great a loser I may be in point of grace and comfort. Nor am I afraid of my face; it is now as the Lord has made it, and it will be so after the small-pox. If it pleases him, I hope it will please me. In short, though I do not censure others, yet, as to myself, inoculation is what I dare not venture upon. If I did venture, and the issue should not be favourable, I should blame myself for having attempted to take the management out of the Lord's hand into my own, which I never did yet in other matters, without finding I am no more able than I am worthy to choose for myself. Besides, at the best, inoculation would only secure me from one of the innumerable natural evils the flesh is heir to; I should still be as liable as I am at present to a putrid fever, a bilious cholic, an inflammation in the bowels or in the brain, and a thousand formidable diseases which are hovering round me, and only wait his permission to cut me off in a few days or hours: and therefore I am determined, by his grace, to resign myself to his disposal. Let me fall into the hands of the Lord (for his mercies are great), and not into the hands of men."

If a person should talk to me in this strain, most certainly I could not say, Notwithstanding all this, your safest way is to be inoculated.

We preach and hear, and I hope we know something of faith, as enabling us to intrust the Lord with our souls: I wish we had all more faith to intrust him with our bodies, our health, our provision, and our temporal comforts likewise. The former should seem to require the strongest faith of the two. How strange is it, that when we think we can do the greater, we should be so awkward and unskilful when we aim at the less! Give my love to your friend. I dare not advise: but if she can quietly return at the usual time, and neither run intentionally into the way of the small-pox, nor run out of the way, but leave it simply with the Lord, I shall not blame her. And if you will mind your praying and preaching, and believe that the Lord can take care of her without any of your contrivances, I shall not blame you: nay, I shall praise him for you both. My prescription is, to read Dr. Watts' cxxist Psalm every morning before breakfast, and pray it over till the cure is effected. *Probatum est.*

Hast thou not given thy word,
To save my soul from death?
And I can trust my Lord
To keep my mortal breath.
I'll go and come,
Nor fear to die,
Till from on high
Thou call me home.

Adieu. Pray for your's.

LETTERS

TO MISS TH———.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR MADAM,

LET what has been said on the subject of acquaintance, &c. suffice. It was well meant on my side and well taken on yours. You may, perhaps, see that my hints were not wholly unnecessary, and I ought to be satisfied with your apology and am so. The circumstance of your being seen at the play-house has nothing at all mysterious in it: as you say you have not been there these six or seven years, it was neither more nor less than a mistake. I heard you had been there within these two years: I am glad to find I was misinformed. I think there is no harm in your supposing, that of the many thousands who frequent public diversions some may in other respects be better than yourself; but I hope your humble and charitable construction of their mistake will not lead you to extenuate the evil of those diversions in themselves. For though I am persuaded, that a few, who know better what to do with themselves, are, for want of consideration, drawn in to expose themselves in such places; yet I am well satisfied that, if there is any practice in this land sinful, attendance on the playhouse is properly and eminently so. The theatres are fountains and means of vice; I had almost said, in the same manner and degree as the ordinances of the gospel are the means of grace: and I can hardly think there is a christian upon earth who would dare to be seen there, if the nature and effects of the theatre were properly set before them. Dr. Witherspoon of Scotland has written an exellent piece upon the stage, or rather against it, which I wish every person who makes the least pretence to fear God had an opportunity of perusing. I cannot judge much more favourably of Ranelagh, Vauxhall, and all the innumerable train of dissipations by which the god of this world blinds the eyes of multitudes, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in upon them. What an awful aspect upon the present times have such texts as Isa. xxii. 12—14, iii. 12, Amos, vi. 3, 6, James, iv. 4. I wish you, therefore, not to plead for any of them, but use all your influence to make them shunned as pest-houses, and dangerous nuisances to precious souls; especially, if you know any who, you hope, in the main are seriously disposed, who yet venture themselves in those purlieus of Satan, endeavour earnestly and faithfully to undeceive them.

The time is short, eternity at the door: and was there no other evil in these vain amusements than the loss of precious time (but, alas! their name is legion), we have not leisure in our circumstances to regard them. But, blessed be God! we need them not. The gospel opens a source of purer, sweeter, and more substantial pleasures: we are invited to communion with God; we are called to share in the theme of angels, the songs of heaven, and the wonders of redeeming love are laid open to our view. The Lord himself is waiting to be gracious, waiting with promises and pardons in his hands. Well, then, may we bid adieu to the perishing pleasures of sin; well may we pity those who can find pleasure in those places and parties where he is shut out; where his name is only mentioned to be profaned; where his commandments are not only broken but insulted; where sinners proclaim their shame as in Sodom, and attempt not to hide it; where at best wickedness is wrapt up in a disguise of delicacy, to make it more insinuating, and nothing is offensive that is not grossly and unpolitely indecent.

I sympathize with all your complaints; but if the Lord is pleased to make them subservient to the increase of your sanctification

to wean you more and more from this world, and to draw you nearer to himself, you will one day see cause to be thankful for them, and to number them amongst your choicest mercies. A hundred years hence it will signify little to you whether you were sick or well the day I wrote this letter.

We thank you for your kind condolence. There is a pleasure in the pity of a friend; but the Lord alone can give true comfort. I hope he will sanctify the breach, and do us good. Mrs. —— exchanges forgiveness with you about your not meeting in London; that is, you forgive her not coming to you, and she forgives you entertaining a suspicious thought of her friendship (though but for a minute) on account of what she was really unable to do.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

September 1, 1767.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I SHALL not study for expressions to tell my dear friend how much we were affected by the news that came last post. We had, however, the pleasure to hear that your family was safe. I hope this will find you recovered from the hurry of spirits you must have been thrown into, and that both you and your papa are composed under the appointment of him who has a right to dispose of his own as he pleases; for we know, that whatever may be the second causes and occasions, nothing can happen to us but according to the will of our heavenly Father. Since what is past cannot be recalled, my part is now to pray, that this, and every other dispensation you meet with, may be sanctified to your soul's good, that you may be more devoted to the God of your life, and have a clearer sense of your interest in that kingdom which cannot be shaken, that treasure which neither thieves nor flames can touch, that better and more enduring substance which is laid up for believers, where Jesus their Head and Saviour is. With this view you may take joyfully the spoiling of your goods.

I think I can feel for my friends; but for such as I hope have a right to that promise, that all things shall work together for their good, I soon check my solicitude, and ask myself, Do I love them better, or could I manage more wisely for them, than the Lord does? Can I wish them to be in safer or more compassionate hands than in his? Will he who delights in the prosperity of his servants, afflict them with sickness, losses, and alarms, except he sees there is need of these things? Such thoughts calm the emotions of my mind. I sincerely condole you; but the command is, to rejoice always in the Lord. The visitation was accompanied with mercy. Not such a case as that of the late Lady Molesworth's, which made every one's ears to tingle that heard it. Nor is yours such a case as of some, who, in almost every great fire lose their all, and perhaps have no knowledge of God to support them.

Though our first apprehensions were for you, we almost forgot you for a moment, when we thought of your next-door neighbour, and the circumstance she was in, so unfit to bear either a fright or a removal. We shall be in much suspense till we hear from you. God grant that you may be able to send us good news, that you are all well, at least as well as can be expected after such a distressing scene. If what has happened should give you more leisure, or more inclination, to spend a little time with us, I think I need not say we shall rejoice to receive you

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

September 17, 1767

MY DEAR MADAM,

THE vanity of all things below is confirmed to us by daily experience. Amongst other proofs, one is, the precariousness of our intimacies, and what little things, or rather what nothings will sometimes produce a coolness, or at least a strangeness between the dearest friends. How is it that our correspondence has been dropt, and that, after having written two letters since the fire, which removed you from your former residence, I should be still disappointed in my hopes of an answer? On our parts I hope there has been no abatement of regard; nor can I charge you with any thing but remissness. Therefore, waving the past, and all apologies on either side, let me beg you to write soon, to tell us how it is with you, and how you have been supported under the various changes you have met with since we saw you last. I doubt not but you have met with many exercises. I pray that they may have been sanctified to lead you nearer to the Lord, the foundation of all consolation, who is the only refuge in time of troubles, and whose gracious presence is abundantly able to make up every deficiency and every loss. Perhaps the reading of this may recal to your mind our past conversations, and the subjects of the many letters we have exchanged. I know not in what manner to write after so long an interval. I would hope your silence to us has not been owing to any change of sentiments, which might make such letters as mine less welcome to you. Yet when you had a friend, who I think you believed very nearly interested himself in your welfare, it seems strange that in a course of two years you should have nothing to com-

municate. I cannot suppose you have forgotten me; I am sure I have not forgotten you; and therefore I long to hear from you soon, that I may know how to write; and should this likewise pass unanswered, I must sit down and mourn over my loss.

As to our affairs, I can tell you the Lord has been and is exceedingly gracious to us: our lives are preserved, our healths continued, an abundance of mercies and blessings on every side; but especially we have to praise him that he is pleased to crown the means and ordinances of his grace with tokens of his presence. It is my happiness to be fixed amongst an affectionate people, who make an open profession of the truth as it is in Jesus, and are enabled, in some measure, to shew forth its power in their lives and conversation. We walk in peace and harmony. I have reason to say the Lord Jesus is a good master, and that the doctrine of free salvation, by faith in his name, is a doctrine according to godliness; for through mercy I find it daily effectual to the breaking down the strongholds of sin, and turning the hearts of sinners from dead works to serve the living God. May the Lord give my dear friend to live in the power and consolation of his precious truth!

I am, &c.

up, and I doubt not but your disappointment did you more good than if you had heard with all the pleasure you expected.

The Lord was pleased to visit me with a slight illness in my late journey. I was far from well on the Tuesday, but supposed it owing to the fatigue of riding, and the heat of the weather; but the next day I was taken with a shivering, to which a fever succeeded. I was then near sixty miles from home. The Lord gave me much peace in my soul, and I was enabled to hope he would bring me safe home, in which I was not disappointed; and though I had the fever most part of the way, my journey was not unpleasant. He likewise strengthened me to preach twice on Sunday; and at night I found myself well, only very weary, and I have continued well ever since. I have reason to speak much of his goodness, and to kiss the rod, for it was sweetened with abundant mercies. I thought that, had it been his pleasure I should have continued sick at Oxford, or even have died there, I had no objection. Though I had not that joy and sensible comfort which some are favoured with, yet I was quite free from pain, fear, and care, and felt myself sweetly composed to his will, whatever it might be. Thus he fulfils his promise in making our strength equal to our day; and every new trial gives us a new proof how happy it is to be enabled to put our trust in him.

I hope, in the midst of all your engagements, you find a little time to read his good word, and to wait at his mercy-seat. It is good for us to draw nigh to him. It is an honour that he permits us to pray; and we shall surely find he is a prayer-hearing God. Endeavour to be diligent in the means; yet watch and strive against a legal spirit, which is always aiming to represent him as a hard master, watching as it were to take advantage of us. But it is far otherwise. His name is Love; he looks upon us with compassion; he knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust; and when our infirmities prevail, he does not bid us despond, but reminds us that we have an advocate with the Father, who is able to pity, to pardon, and to save to the uttermost. Think of the names and relations he bears. Does he not call himself a Saviour, a shepherd, a friend, and a husband? Has he not made known unto us his love, his blood, his righteousness, his promises, his power, and his grace, and all for our encouragement? Away, then, with all doubting, unbelieving thoughts; they will not only distress your heart, but weaken your hands. Take it for granted, upon the warrant of his word, that you are his and he is yours; that he has loved you with an everlasting love, and therefore in loving-kindness has drawn you to himself; that he will surely accomplish that which he has begun, and that nothing which can be named or thought of shall ever be able to separate you from him. This persuasion will give you strength for the battle; this is the shield which will quench the fiery darts of Satan; this is the helmet which the enemy cannot pierce. Whereas, if we go forth doubting and fearing, and are afraid to trust any farther than we can feel, we are weak as water, and easily overcome. Be strong, therefore, not in yourself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Pray for me, and believe me to be,

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

March 14, ——

I THINK you would hardly expect me to write if you knew how I am forced to live in London. However, I would have you believe I am as willing to write to you as you are to receive my letters. As a proof, I try to send you a few lines now, though I am writing to you and talking to Mrs. —— both at once; and this is the only season I can have to change a few words with her. She is a woman of a sorrowful spirit; she talks and weeps. I believe she would think herself happy to be situated as you are, notwithstanding the many advantages she has at London. I see daily, and I hope you have likewise learned, that places and outward circumstances cannot of themselves either hinder or help us in walking with God. So far as he is pleased to be with us, and teach us by his Spirit, wherever we are we shall get forward; and if he does not bless us and water us every moment, the more we have of our own wishes and wills, the more uneasy we shall make ourselves.

One thing is needful; an humble, dependent spirit, to renounce our own wills, and give up ourselves to his disposal without reserve. This is the path of peace, and it is the path of safety; for he has said, The meek he will teach his way, and those who yield up themselves to him he will guide with his eye. I hope you will fight and pray against every rising of a murmuring spirit, and be thankful for the great things which he has already done for you. It is good to be humbled for sin, but not to be discouraged; for though we are poor creatures, Jesus is a complete Saviour; and we bring more honour to God, by believing in his name, and trusting his word of promise, than we could do by a thousand outward works.

I pray the Lord to shine upon your soul, and to fill you with all joy and peace in believing. Remember to pray for us, that we may be brought home to you in peace

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO ——.

LETTER I.

March 18, 1767.

I CAN truly say, that I bear you upon my heart and in my prayers. I have rejoiced to see the beginning of a good and gracious work in you; and I have confidence in the Lord Jesus, that he will carry it on and complete it, and that you will be amongst the number of those who shall sing redeeming love to eternity. Therefore, fear none of the things appointed for you to suffer by the way; but gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end. Be not impatient, but wait humbly upon the Lord. You have one hard lesson to learn, that is, the evil of your own heart: you know something of it, but it is needful that you should know more; for the more we know of ourselves, the more we shall prize and love Jesus and his salvatio... I hope what you find in yourself by daily experience will humble you, but not discourage you; humble you it should, and I believe it does. Are not you amazed sometimes that you should have so much as a hope, that, poor and needy as you are, the Lord thinketh of you? But let not all you feel discourage you; for if our Physician is almighty, our disease cannot be desperate; and if he cast none out that come to him, why should you fear? Our sins are many, but his mercies are more: our sins are great, but his righteousness is greater: we are weak, but he is power. Most of our mplaints are owing to unbelief, and the reainder of a legal spirit; and these evils are ot removed in a day. Wait on the Lord, nd he will enable you to see more and more the power and grace of our High-Priest. he more you know him, the better you will ust him: the more you trust him, the better ou will love him; the more you love him, e better you will serve him. This is God's aw: you are not called to buy, but to beg; to be strong in yourself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is teaching you these things, and I trust he will teach you to the end. Remember the growth of a believer is not like a mushroom, but like an oak, which increases slowly indeed, but surely. Many suns, showers, and frosts, pass upon it before it comes to perfection; and in winter, when it seems dead, it is gathering strength at the root. Be humble, watchful, and diligent in the means, and endeavour to look through all, and fix your eye upon Jesus, and all shall be well. I commend you to the care of the good Shepherd, and remain, for his sake

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

May 31, 1769.

I WAS sorry I did not write as you expected, but I hope it will do now. Indeed, I have not forgotten you; you are often in my thoughts, and seldom omitted in my prayers I hope the Lord will make what you see and hear while abroad profitable to you, to increase your knowledge, to strengthen your faith, and to make you from henceforth well satisfied with your situation. If I am not mistaken, you will be sensible, that though there are some desirable things to be met with in London preferable to any other place, yet upon the whole, a quiet situation in the country, under one stated ministry, and in connection with one people, has the advantage. It is pleasant now and then to have opportunity of hearing a variety of preachers, but the best and greatest of them are no more than instruments; some can please the ear better than others, but none can reach the heart any farther than the Lord is pleased to open it. This he shewed you upon your first going

LETTER IV.

London, August 19, 1775.

You see I am mindful of my promise, and glad should I be to write something that the Lord may be pleased to make a word in season. I went yesterday into the pulpit very dry and heartless. I seemed to have fixed upon a text, but when I came to the pinch, it was so shut up that I could not preach from it. I had hardly a minute to choose, and therefore was forced to snatch at that which came first upon my mind, which proved 2 Tim. i. 12. Thus I set off at a venture, having no resource but in the Lord's mercy and faithfulness; and, indeed, what other can we wish for? Presently my subject opened, and I know not when I have been favoured with more liberty. Why do I tell you this? Only as an instance of his goodness, to encourage you to put your strength in him, and not to be afraid, even when you feel your own weakness and insufficiency most sensibly. We are never more safe, never have more reason to expect the Lord's help, than when we are most sensible that we can do nothing without him. This was the lesson Paul learned, to rejoice in his own poverty and emptiness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Could Paul have done any thing, Jesus would not have had the honour of doing all. This way of being saved entirely by grace, from first to last, is contrary to our natural wills; it mortifies self, leaving it nothing to boast of, and through the remains of an unbelieving, legal spirit, it often seems discouraging. When we think ourselves so utterly helpless and worthless, we are too ready to fear that the Lord will therefore reject us; whereas, in truth, such a poverty of spirit is the best mark we can have of an interest in his promises and care.

How often have I longed to be an instrument of establishing you in the peace and hope of the gospel! and I have but one way of attempting it, by telling you over and over of the power and grace of Jesus. You want nothing to make you happy, but to have the eyes of your understanding more fixed upon the Redeemer, and more enlightened by the Holy Spirit to behold his glory. O! he is a suitable Saviour! He has power, authority, and compassion, to save to the uttermost. He has given his word of promise to engage our confidence, and he is able and faithful to make good the expectations and desires he has raised in us. Put your trust in him; believe, as we say, through thick and thin, in defiance of all objections from within and without. For this Abraham is recommended as a pattern to us. He overlooked all difficulties, he ventured and hoped even against hope, in a case which, to appearance, was desperate; because he knew that he who had promised was able to perform.

Your sister is much upon my mind; her illness grieves me; were it in my power, I would quickly remove it. The Lord can, and I hope he will, when it has answered the end for which he sent it. I trust he has brought her to us for good, and that she is chastised by him, that she may not be condemned with the world. I hope, though she says little, she lifts up her heart to him for a blessing. I wish you may be enabled to leave her and yourself, and all your concerns, in his hands. He has a sovereign right to do with us as he pleases; and if we consider what we are, surely we shall confess we have no reason to complain; and to those who seek him, his sovereignty is exercised in a way of grace. All shall work together for good; every thing is needful that he sends; nothing can be needful that he with-holds. Be content to bear the cross; others have borne it before you. You have need of patience; and if you ask, the Lord will give it; but there can be no settled peace till our will is in a measure subdued. Hide yourself under the shadow of his wings; rely upon his care and power; look upon him as a physician who has graciously undertaken to heal your soul of the worst of sicknesses, sin. Yield to his prescriptions, and fight against every thought that would represent it as desirable to be permitted to choose for yourself. When you cannot see your way, be satisfied that he is your leader. When your spirit is overwhelmed within you, he knows your path; he will not leave you to sink. He has appointed seasons of refreshment, and you shall find he does not forget you. Above all, keep close to the throne of grace. If we seem to get no good by attempting to draw near him, we may be sure we shall get none by keeping away from him.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

I PROMISED you another letter, and now for the performance. If I had said, it may be, or, perhaps I will, you would be in suspense; but if I promise, then you expect that I will not disappoint you, unless something should render it impossible for me to make my word good. I thank you for your good opinion of me, and for thinking I mean what I say; and I pray that you may be enabled more and more to honour the Lord, by believing his promise; for he is not a man that he should fail or change, or be prevented by any thing unforeseen from doing what he has said. And yet we find it easier to trust to worms than to the God of truth. Is it not so with you? And I can assure you it is often so with me.

But here is the mercy, that his ways are above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Though we are foolish and unbelieving, he remains faithful; he will not deny himself. I recommend to you especially that promise of God, which is so comprehensive, that it takes in all our concernments, I mean, that all things shall work together for good. How hard is it to believe, that not only those things which are grievous to the flesh, but even those things which draw forth our corruptions, and discover to us what is in our hearts, and fill us with guilt and shame, should in the issue work for our good! Yet the Lord has said it. All your pains and trials, all that befals you in your own person, or that affects you upon the account of others, shall in the end prove to your advantage. And your peace does not depend upon any change of circumstances which may appear desirable, but in having your will bowed to the Lord's will, and made willing to submit all to his disposal and management. Pray for this, and wait patiently for him, and he will do it. Be not surprised to find yourself poor, helpless, and vile; all whom he favours and teaches will find themselves so. The more grace increases, the more we shall see to abase us in our own eyes; and this will make the Saviour and his salvation more precious to us. He takes his own wise methods to humble you, and to prove you, and I am sure he will do you good in the end.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

September 16, 1775.

WHEN you receive this, I hope it will give you pleasure to think, that if the Lord be pleased to favour us with health, we shall all meet again in a few days. I have met with much kindness at London, and many comforts and mercies; however, I shall be glad to return home. There my heart lives, let my body be where it will. I long to see all my dear people, and I shall be glad to see you. I steal a little time to write another line or two, more to satisfy you, than for any thing particular I have to say. I thank you for your letter. I doubt not but the Lord is bringing you forward, and that you have a good right to say to your soul, Why art thou cast down and disquieted? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him. An evil heart, an evil temper, and the many crosses we meet with in passing through an evil world, will cut us out trouble. but the Lord has provided a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care; the fruit of all is to take away sin, and the end of all will be eternal life in glory. Think of these words; put them in the balance of the sanctuary; and then throw all your trials into the opposite scale, and you will find there is no proportion between them. Say then, "Though he slay me, I will trust in him;" for when he has fully tried me, I shall come forth like gold You would have liked to have been with me last Wednesday. I preached at Westminster bridewell. It is a prison and house of correction. The bulk of my congregation were housebreakers, highwaymen, pickpockets, and poor unhappy women, such as infest the streets of this city, sunk in sin, and lost to shame I had a hundred or more of these before me. I preached from 1 Tim. i. 15, and began with telling them my own story: this gained their attention more than I expected. I spoke to them near an hour and a half. I shed many tears myself, and saw some of them shed tears likewise. Ah! had you seen their present condition, and could you hear the history of some of them, it would make you sing,

O to grace how great a debtor!

By nature they were no worse than the most sober and modest people. And there was doubtless a time when many of them little thought what they should live to do and suffer. I might have been, like them, in chains, and one of them have come to preach to me, had the Lord so pleased.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Oct. 10, 1777

I AM just come from seeing A—— N——. The people told me she is much better than she was, but she is far from being well. She was brought to me into a parlour, which saved me the painful task of going to inquire and seek for her among the patients. My spirits always sink when I am within those mournful walls, and I think no money could prevail on me to spend an hour there every day. Yet surely no sight upon earth is more suited to teach one thankfulness and resignation. Surely I have reason, in my worst times, to be thankful that I am out of hell, out of bedlam, out of Newgate. If my eyes were as bad as yours, and my back worse, still I hope I should set a great value upon this mercy, that my senses are preserved. I hope you will think so too. The Lord afflicts us at times; but it is always a thousand times less than we deserve, and much less than many of our fellow-creatures are suffering around us. Let us therefore pray for grace to be humble, thankful, and patient.

This day twelvemonth I was under Mr. W——'s knife; there is another cause for thankfulness, that the Lord inclined me to submit to the operation, and brought me happily through it. In short, I have so many rea-

sons for thankfulness, that I cannot count them. I may truly say, they are more in number than the hairs of my head. And yet, alas! how cold, insensible, and ungrateful! I could make as many complaints as you; but I find no good by complaining, except to him who is able to help me. It is better for you and me to be admiring the compassion and fulness of grace that is in our Saviour, than to dwell and pore too much upon our own poverty and vileness. He is able to help and save to the uttermost: there I desire to cast anchor, and wish you to do so likewise. Hope in God, for you shall yet praise him.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MR. C——,

LETTER I.

January 16, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

THE death of a near relative called me from home in December, and a fortnight's absence threw me so far behind-hand in my course, that I deferred acknowledging your letter much longer than I intended. I now thank you for it. I can sympathize with you in your troubles; yet knowing the nature of our calling, that, by an unalterable appointment, the way to the kingdom lies through many tribulations, I ought to rejoice rather than otherwise, that to you it is given, not only to believe, but also to suffer. If you escaped these things, whereof all the Lord's children are partakers, might you not question your adoption into his family? How could the power of grace be manifest, either to you, in you, or by you, without afflictions? How could the corruptions and devastations of the heart be checked without a cross? How could you acquire a tenderness and skill in speaking to them that are weary, without a taste of such trials as they also meet with? You could only be a hearsay witness to the truth, power, and sweetness of the precious promises, unless you have been in such a situation as to need them, and to find their suitableness and sufficiency. The Lord has given you a good desire to serve him in the gospel, and he is now training you for that service. Many things, yea, the most important things belonging to the gospel-ministry, are not to be learned by books and study, but by painful experience. You must expect a variety of exercises; but two things he has promised you, that you shall not be tried above what he will enable you to bear, and that all shall work together for your good. We read somewhere of a conceited orator, who declaimed upon the management of war in the presence of Hannibal, and of the contempt with which Hannibal treated his performance. He deserved it; for how should a man who had never seen a field of battle be a competent judge of such a subject? Just so, were we to acquire no other knowledge of the christian warfare than what we could derive from cool and undisturbed study, instead of coming forth as able ministers of the New Testament, and competently acquainted with the τα σατανα, with the devices, the deep-laid counsels and stratagems of Satan, we should prove but mere declaimers. But the Lord will take better care of those whom he loves and designs to honour. He will try, and permit them to be tried in various ways. He will make them feel much in themselves, that they may know how to feel much for others; according to that beautiful and expressive line,

Haud ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.

And as this previous discipline is necessary to enable us to take the field in a public capacity with courage, wisdom, and success, that we may lead and animate others in the fight, it is equally necessary, for our own sakes, that we may obtain and preserve the grace of humility, which I perceive with pleasure he has taught you to set a high value upon. Indeed we cannot value it too highly; for we can be neither comfortable, safe, nor habitually useful, without it. The root of pride lies deep in our fallen nature, and, where the Lord has given natural and acquired abilities, it would grow apace if he did not mercifully watch over us, and suit his dispensations to keep it down. Therefore I trust he will make you willing to endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. May he enable you to behold him with faith holding out the prize, and saying to you, Fear none of these things that thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful

unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

We sail upon a turbulent and tumultuous sea; but we are embarked on a good bottom, and in a good cause, and we have an infallible and almighty pilot, who has the winds and weather at his command, and can silence the storm into a calm with a word whenever he pleases. We may be persecuted, but we shall not be forsaken: we may be cast down, but we cannot be destroyed. Many will thrust sore at us that we may fall, but the Lord will be our stay.

I am sorry to find you are quite alone at Cambridge, for I hoped there would be a succession of serious students to supply the place of those who are transplanted to shine as lights in the world. Yet you are not alone; for the Lord is with you, the best counsellor and the best friend. There is a strange backwardness in us, at least in me, fully to improve that gracious intimacy to which he invites us. Alas! that we so easily wander from the fountain of life to hew out cisterns for ourselves, and that we seem more attached to a few drops of his grace in our fellow-creatures, than to the fulness of grace that is in himself. I think nothing gives me a more striking sense of my depravity than my perverseness and folly in this respect; yet he bears with me, and does me good continually.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

March —, 1776.

DEAR SIR,

I KNOW not the length of your college-terms, but hope this may come time enough to find you still resident. I shall not apologise for writing no sooner, because I leave other letters of much longer date unanswered that I may write so soon. It gave me particular pleasure to hear that the Lord helped you through your difficulties, and succeeded your desires. And I have sympathized with you in the complaints you make of a dark and mournful frame of spirits afterwards. But is not this upon the whole right and salutary, that if the Lord is pleased at one time to strengthen us remarkably in answer to prayer, he should leave us at another time, so far as to give us a real sensibility that we were supported by his power and not our own? Besides, as you feel a danger of being elated by the respect paid you, was it not a merciful and seasonable dispensation that made you feel your own weakness, to prevent your being exalted above measure? The Lord, by withdrawing his smiles from you, reminded you that the smiles of men are of little value, otherwise perhaps you might have esteemed them too highly. Indeed you scholars that know the Lord are singular instances of the power of his grace; for (like the young men in Dan. iii.) you live in the very midst of the fire. Mathematical studies, in particular, have such a tendency to engross and fix the mind to the contemplation of cold and uninteresting truth, and you are surrounded with so much intoxicating applause if you succeed in your researches, that for a soul to be kept humble and alive in such a situation, is such a proof of the Lord's presence and power as Moses had when he saw the bush unconsumed in the midst of the flames. I believe I had naturally a turn for the mathematics myself, and dabbled in them a little way; and though I did not go far, my head, sleeping and waking, was stuffed with diagrams and calculations. Every thing I looked at, that exhibited either a right line or a curve, set my wits a wool-gathering. What, then, must have been the case, had I proceeded to the interior arcana of speculative geometry? I bought my namesake's *Principia*, but I have reason to be thankful that I left it as I found it, a sealed book, and that the bent of my mind was drawn to something of more real importance before I understood it. I say not this to discourage you in your pursuits; they lie in your line and path of duty, in mine they did not. As to your academics, I am glad that the Lord enables you to shew those among whom you live, that the knowledge of his gospel does not despoil you either of diligence or acumen. However, as I said, you need a double guard of grace, to preserve you from being either puffed up or deadened by those things, which, considered in any other view than *quoad hoc*, to preserve your rank and character in the university while you remain there, are, if taken in the aggregate, little better than a *splendidum nihil*. If my poor people at —— could form the least conception of what the learned at Cambridge chiefly admire in each other, and what is the intrinsic reward of all their toil, they would say (supposing they could speak Latin), *Quam suave istis suavitatibus carere!* How gladly would some of them, if such mathematical and metaphysical lumber could by any means get into their heads, how gladly would they drink at Lethé's stream to get it out again! How many perplexities are they freed from by their happy ignorance, which often pester those to their lives end who have had their natural proneness to vain reasoning sharpened by academical studies.

I am, &c.

LETTER III

May 18, 1776.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I wished to hear from you sooner, I put a candid interpretation upon your silence, was something apprehensive for your health, but felt no disposition to anger. Let your correspondence be free from fetters. Write when you please, and when you can: I will do the like. Apologies may be spared on both sides. I am not a very punctual correspondent myself, having so many letters to write, and therefore, have no right to stand upon punctilios with you.

I sympathize with you in your sorrow for your friend's death. Such cases are very distressing! But such a case might have been our own. Let us pray for grace to be thankful for ourselves, and submit every thing in humble silence to the sovereign Lord, who has a right to do as he pleases with his own. We feel what happens in our own little connections; but, O the dreadful mischief of sin! Instances of this kind are as frequent as the hours, the minutes, perhaps the moments of every day: and though we know but one in a million, the souls of others have an equal capacity for endless happiness or misery. In this situation the Lord has honoured us with a call to warn our fellow-sinners of their danger, and to set before them his free and sure salvation; and if he is pleased to make us instrumental of snatching but one as a brand out of the fire, it is a service of more importance than to be the means of preserving a whole nation from temporal ruin. I congratulate you upon your admission into the ministry, and pray him to favour you with a single eye to his glory, and a fresh anointing of his Holy Spirit, that you may come forth as a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of his kingdom, and that his word in your mouth may abundantly prosper.

I truly pity those who rise early and take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, with no higher prize and prospect in view than the obtaining of academical honours. Such pursuits will, ere long, appear (as they really are) vain as the sports of children. May the Lord impress them with a noble ambition of living to and for him. If these adventurers, who are labouring for pebbles under the semblance of goodly pearls, had a discovery of the pearl of great price, how quickly and gladly would they lay down their admired attainments, and become fools that they might be truly wise! What a snare have you escaped! You would have been poorly content with the name of a mathematician or a poet, and looked no farther, had not he visited your heart, and enlightened you by his grace. Now I trust you account your former gain but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord. What you have attained in a way of literature will be useful to you if sanctified, and chiefly so by the knowledge you have of its insufficiency to any valuable purpose, in the great concerns of walking with God, and winning souls.

I am pleased with your fears lest you should not be understood in your preaching. Indeed, there is a danger of it. It is not easy for persons of quick parts duly to conceive how amazingly ignorant and slow of apprehension the bulk of our congregations generally are. When our own ideas are clear, and our expressions proper, we are ready to think we have sufficiently explained ourselves; and yet, perhaps, nine out of ten (especially of those who are destitute of spiritual light) know little more of what we say than if we were speaking Greek. A degree of this inconvenience is always inseparable from written discourses. They cast our thoughts into a style which, though familiar to ourselves, is too remote from common conversation to be comprehended by narrow capacities; which is one chief reason of the preference I give *(cæteris paribus)* to extempore preaching. When we read to the people, they think themselves less concerned in what is offered, than when we speak to them point-blank. It seems a good rule, which I have met with somewhere, and which, perhaps, I have mentioned to you, to fix our eyes upon some one of the auditory whom we judge of the least capacity; if we can make him understand, we may hope to be understood by the rest. Let those who seek to be admired for the exactness of their compositions, enjoy the poor reward they aim at. It is best for gospel-preachers to speak plain language. If we thus singly aim at the glory of our Master and the good of souls, we may hope for the accompanying power of his Spirit, which will give our discourses a weight and energy that Demosthenes had no conception of.

I can give you no information of a curacy in a better situation. But either the Lord will provide you one, or I trust he will give you usefulness, and a competency of health and spirits where you are. He who caused Daniel to thrive upon pulse, can make you strong and cheerful even in the Fens, if he sees that best for you. All things obey him, and you need not fear but he will enable you for whatever service he has appointed you to perform.

This letter has been a week in hand, owing to a variety of interruptions from without, and indispositions within. I seem to while away my life, and shall be glad to be saved upon the footing of the thief upon the cross, without any hope or plea but the power and grace of Jesus, who has said, I will in no wise cast out. Adieu.

Pray for your's, &c.

LETTER IV.

September 10, 1777.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS glad to hear from you at last, not being willing to think myself forgotten. I supposed you were ill. It seems, by your account, that you are far from being well; but I hope you are as well as you ought to be, that is, as well as the Lord sees it good for you to be. I say, I hope so; for I am not sure that the length and vehemence of your sermons, which you tell me astonish many people, may not be rather improper and imprudent, considering the weakness of your constitution; at least, if this expression of your's be justly expounded by a report which has reached me, that the length of your sermons is frequently two hours, and the vehemence of your voice so great, that you may be heard far beyond the church-walls. Unwilling should I be to damp your zeal; but I feel unwilling likewise, that by excessive, unnecessary exertions, you should wear away at once, and preclude your own usefulness. This concern is so much upon my mind, that I begin with it, though it makes me skip over the former part of your letter; but when I have relieved myself upon this point, I can easily skip back again. I am perhaps the more ready to credit the report, because I know the spirits of you nervous people are highly volatile. I consider you as mounted upon a fiery steed; and provided you use due management and circumspection, you travel more pleasantly than we plodding folks upon our sober, phlegmatic nags; but then, if, instead of pulling the rein you plunge in the spurs, and add wings to the wind, I cannot but be in pain for the consequences. Permit me to remind you of the Terentian adage, *Ne quid nimis*. The end of speaking is to be heard, and if the person farthest from the preacher can hear, he speaks loud enough. Upon some occasions, a few sentences of a discourse may be enforced with a tone of voice still more elevated; but to be uncommonly loud from beginning to end, is hurtful to the speaker, and, I apprehend, no way useful to the hearer. It is a fault which many inadvertently give into at first, and which many have repented of too late; when practice has rendered it habitual it is not easily corrected. I know some think, that preaching very loudly, and preaching with power, are synonymous expressions, but your judgment is too good to fall in with that prejudice. If I were a good Grecian, I would send you a quotation from Homer, where he describes the eloquence of Nestor, and compares it, if I remember right, not to a thunder-storm or a hurricane, but to a fall of snow, which, though pressing, insinuating, and penetrating, is soft and gentle. You know the passage; I think the simile is beautiful and expressive.

Secondly (as we say), as to long preaching, there is still in being an old-fashioned instrument, called an hour-glass, which, in days of yore, before clocks and watches abounded, used to be the measure of many a good sermon, and I think it a tolerable stint. I cannot wind up my ends to my own satisfaction in a much shorter time, nor am I pleased with myself if I greatly exceed it. If an angel was to preach for two hours, unless his hearers were angels likewise, I believe the greater part of them would wish he had done. It is a shame it should be so; but so it is, partly through the weakness, and partly through the wickedness of the flesh, we can seldom stretch our attention to spiritual things for two hours together without cracking it, and hurting its spring; and when weariness begins, edification ends. Perhaps it is better to feed our people like chickens, a little and often, than to cram them like turkeys, till they cannot hold one gobbet more. Besides, overlong sermons break in upon family-concerns, and often call off the thoughts from the sermon to the pudding at home, which is in danger of being over-boiled. They leave likewise but little time for secret or family religion, which are both very good in their place, and are entitled to a share in the Lord's day. Upon the preacher they must have a bad effect and tend to wear him down before his time: and I have known some, by over-acting at first, have been constrained to sit still and do little or nothing for months or years afterwards. I rather recommend to you the advice of your brother Cantab, Hobson the carrier, so to set out as that you may hold out to your journey's end.

Now, if Fame, with her hundred mouths, has brought me a false report of you, and you are not guilty of preaching either too long or too loud, still I am not willing my remonstrance may stand for nothing. I desire you will accept it, and thank me for it, as a proof of my love to you, and likewise of the sincerity of my friendship; for if I had wished to flatter you, I could easily have called another subject.

I have one more report to trouble you with, because it troubles me; and therefore you must bear a part of my burden. Assure me it is false, and I will send you one of the handsomest letters I can devise by way of thanks. It is reported, then (but I will not believe it till you say I must), that you stand upon your tiptoes, upon the point of being whirled out of our vortex, and hurried away, comet-like, into the regions of eccentricity; in plain English, that you have a hankering to be an itinerant. If this be true, I will not be the first to tell it in St John's College, or to publish it on the banks of Cam, lest the mathematicians rejoice, and the poets triumph. But, to be

serious, for it is a serious subject, let me beg you to deliberate well, and to pray earnestly before you take this step. Be afraid of acting in your own spirit, or under a wrong impression; however honestly you mean, you may be mistaken. The Lord has given you a little charge; be faithful in it, and in his good time he will advance you to a greater: but let his providence evidently open the door for you, and be afraid of moving one step before the cloud and pillar. I have had my warm fits and desires of this sort in my time; but I have reason to be thankful that I was held in with a strong hand. I wish there were more itinerant preachers. If a man has grace and zeal, and but little fund, let him go and diffuse the substance of a dozen sermons over as many counties; but you have natural and acquired abilities, which qualify you for the more difficult, and, in my judgment, not less important station of a parochial minister. I wish you to be a burning, shining, steady light. You may perhaps have less popularity, that is, you will be less exposed to workings of self and the snares of Satan, if you stay with us; but I think you may live in the full exercise of your gifts and graces, be more consistent with your voluntary engagements, and have more peace of mind, and humble intercourse with God, in watching over a flock which he has committed to you, than, by forsaking them, to wander up and down the earth without a determined scope.

Thus far I have been more attentive to the *utile* than the *dulce*. I should now return to join you in celebrating the praises of poetry, and the other subjects of your letter; but time and paper fail together. Let me hear from you soon, or I shall fear I have displeased you, which, fond as I am of poetry, would give me more pain than I ever found pleasure in reading Alexander's Feast. Indeed I love you; I often measure over the walks we have taken together; and when I come to a favourite stile, or such a favourite spot upon the hill-top, I am reminded of something that passed, and say, or at least think, *Hic stetit C* ——.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

DEAR SIR,

By your flying letter from London, as well as by your more particular answer to my last, I judge that what I formerly wrote will answer no other end than to be a testimony of my fidelity and friendship. I am ready to think you were so far determined before you applied to the Bishop, as to be rather pleased than disappointed by a refusal which seemed to afford you liberty to preach at large. As your *testimonium* was not countersigned, the consequence was no other than might have been expected; yet I have been told (how true I know not), that the Bishop would have passed over the informality, if you had not, unasked by him, avowed yourself a Methodist. I think, if you had been unwilling to throw hindrances in your own way, the most perfect simplicity would have required no more of you than to have given a plain and honest answer to such questions as he might think proper to propose. You might have assisted Mr. ——— for a season without being in full orders; and you may still, if you are not resolved at all events to push out. He wrote to me about you, and you may easily judge what answer I gave. I have heard from him a second time, and he laments that he cannot have you. I likewise lament that you cannot be with him. I think you would have loved him; and I hoped his acquaintance might not have proved unuseful to you.

If you have not actually passed the Rubicon; if there be yet room for deliberation, I once more intreat you to pause and consider. In many respects I ought to be willing to learn from you; but in one point I have a little advantage of you: I am some years older, both in life and in profession; and in this difference of time perhaps I have learned something more of the heart, the world, and the devices of Satan, than you have had an opportunity for. I hope I would not damp your zeal, but I will pray the Lord to direct it into the best channel for permanent usefulness. I say permanent: I doubt not that you would be useful in the itinerant way; but I more and more observe great inconveniences follow in that way. Where you make a gathering of people, others will follow you; and if they all possessed your spirit, and had your disinterested views it might be well. But generally an able preacher only so far awakens people to a desire to hear, as exposes them to the incursions of various winds of doctrine and the attempts of injudicious pretenders, who will resemble you in nothing but your eagerness to post from place to place. From such measures in time proceed errors, parties, contentions, offences, enthusiasm, spiritual pride, and a noisy ostentatious form of godliness, but little of that power and life of faith which shews itself by humility, meekness, and love.

A parochial minister, who lives among his people, who sees and converses with them frequently, and exemplifies his doctrine in their view by his practice, having knowledge of their states, trials, growth, and dangers, suits himself to their various occasions, and, by the blessing of God, builds them up, and brings them forward in faith and holiness. He is instrumental in forming their experience; he leads them to a solid, orderly, and scriptural knowledge of divine things. If his name is not in so many mouths as that of the itinerant, it is upon the hearts of the people of his charge.

He lives with them as a father with his children. His steady consistent behaviour silences in some measure the clamours of his enemies; and the Lord opens him doors of occasional usefulness in many places, without provoking our superiors to discountenance other young men who are seeking orders.

I now wish I had taken larger paper, for I have not room for all I would say. I have no end to serve. I am of no party. I wish well to irregulars and itinerants who love and preach the gospel. I am content that they should labour that way, who have not talents nor fund to support the character and fill up the office of a parochial minister. But I think you are qualified for more important service. If you had patient faith to wait a while for the Lord's opening, I doubt not but you might yet obtain Priest's orders. We are hasty like children; but God often appoints us a waiting time. Perhaps it requires as much or more grace to wait than to be active; for it is more trying to self. After all, whatever course you take, I shall love you, pray for you, and be glad to see you.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MRS. ———.

LETTER I.

July —, 1764.

MY DEAR MADAM,

THE complaints you make are inseparable from a spiritual acquaintance with our own hearts: I would not wish you to be less affected with a sense of indwelling sin. It becomes us to be humbled unto the dust; yet our grief, though it cannot be too great may be under a wrong direction; and if it leads us to impatience or distrust, it certainly is so.

Sin is the sickness of the soul, in itself mortal and incurable, as to any power in heaven or earth but that of the Lord Jesus only. But he is the great, tho infallible Physician. Have we the privilege to know his name? Have we been enabled to put ourselves into his hand? We have then no more to do but to attend to his prescriptions, to be satisfied with his methods, and to wait his time. It is lawful to wish we were well; it is natural to groan, being burdened; but still he must and will take his own course with us; and, however dissatisfied with ourselves, we ought still to be thankful that he has begun his work in us, and to believe that he will also make an end. Therefore, while we mourn, we should likewise rejoice; we should encourage ourselves to expect all that he has promised; and we should limit our expectations by his promises. We are sure that when the Lord delivers us from the guilt and dominion of sin, he could with equal ease free us entirely from sin if he pleased. The doctrine of sinless perfection is not to be rejected, as though it were a thing simply impossible in itself, for nothing is too hard for the Lord, but because it is contrary to that method which he has chosen to proceed by. He has appointed that sanctification should be effected, and sin mortified, not at once completely, but by little and little; and doubtless he has wise reasons for it. Therefore, though we are to desire a growth in grace, we should at the same time acquiesce in his appointment, and not to be discouraged or despond, because we feel that conflict which his word informs us will only terminate with our lives.

Again, some of the first prayers which the Spirit of God teaches us to put up, are for a clearer sense of the sinfulness of sin, and our vileness on account of it. Now, if the Lord is pleased to answer your prayers in this respect, though it will afford you cause enough for humiliation, yet it should be received likewise with thankfulness, as a token for good. Your heart is not worse than it was formerly, only your spiritual knowledge is increased; and this is no small part of the growth in grace which you are thirsting after, to be truly humbled, and emptied, and made little in your own eyes.

Farther, the examples of the saints recorded in scripture (and indeed of the saints in general) prove, that the greater measure any person has of the grace of God in truth, the more conscientious and lively they have been; and the more they have been favoured with assurances of the divine favour, so much the more deep and sensible their perception of indwelling sin and infirmity has always been: so it was with Job, Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul. It is likewise common to overcharge ourselves. Indeed we cannot think ourselves worse than we really are; yet some things which abate the comfort and alacrity of our christian profession are rather impediments than properly sinful, and will not be imputed to us by him who knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust. Thus, to have an infirm memory, to be subject to disordered, irregular, or low spirits, are faults of the constitution, in which the will has no share, though they are all burdensome and oppressive, and sometimes needlessly so, by

our charging ourselves with guilt on their account. The same may be observed of the unspeakable and fierce suggestions of Satan with which some persons are pestered, but which shall be laid to him from whom they proceed, and not to them who are troubled and terrified because they are forced to feel them.

Lastly, it is by the experience of these evils within ourselves, and by feeling our utter insufficiency, either to perform duty, or to withstand our enemies, that the Lord takes occasion to shew us the suitableness, the sufficiency, the freeness, the unchangeableness of his power and grace. This is the inference St. Paul draws from his complaints, Rom. vii. 25., and he learned it upon a trying occasion from the Lord's own mouth, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

Let us, then, dear Madam, be thankful and cheerful, and, while we take shame to ourselves, let us glorify God by giving Jesus the honour due to his name. Though we are poor, he is rich; though we are weak, he is strong; though we have nothing, he possesses all things. He suffered for us; he calls us to be conformed to him in sufferings. He conquered in his own person, and he will make each of his members more than conquerors in due season. It is good to have one eye upon ourselves, but the other should ever be fixed on him who stands in the relation of Saviour, Husband, Head, and Shepherd. In him we have righteousness, peace, and power. He can controul all that we fear; so that, if our path should be through the fire or through the water, neither the flood shall drown us nor the flame kindle upon us, and ere long he will cut short our conflicts, and say, Come up hither. "Then shall our grateful songs abound, and every tear be wiped away." Having such promises and assurances, let us lift up our banner in his name, and press on through every discouragement.

With regard to company that have not a savour of the best things, as it is not your choice, I would advise you (when necessary) to bear it as a cross. We cannot suffer by being where we ought to be, except through our own impatience; and I have an idea, that when we are providentially called among such (for something is due to friends and relations, whether they walk with us or no), that the hours need not be wholly lost. Nothing can pass but may be improved: the most trivial conversation may afford us new views of the heart, new confirmations of scripture, and renew a sense of our obligations to distinguishing grace, which has made us in any degree to differ. I would wish, when you go amongst your friends, that you do not confine your views to getting safe away from them without loss, but entertain a hope that you may be sent to do some of them good. You cannot tell what effect a word or a look may have, if the Lord is pleased to bless it. I think we may humbly hope, that while we sincerely desire to please the Lord, and to be guided by him in all things, he will not suffer us to take a journey, or hardly to make a short visit, which shall not answer some good purpose to ourselves or others, or both. While your gay friends affect an air of raillery, the Lord may give you a secret witness in their consciences; and something they observe in you, or hear from you, may set them on thinking, perhaps after you are gone, or after the first occasion has entirely slipped your memory, Eccles. xi. 1. For my own part, when I consider the power, the freedom of divine grace, and how sovereign the Lord is in the choice of the instruments and means by which he is pleased to work, I live in hopes from day to day of hearing of wonders of this sort. I despair of nobody; and if I sometimes am ready to think such or such a person seems more unlikely than others to be brought in, I relieve myself by a possibility that that very person, and for that very reason, may be the first instance. The Lord's thoughts are not like ours: in his love and in his ways there are heights which we cannot reach, depths which we cannot fathom, lengths and breadths beyond the ken of our feeble sight. Let us, then, simply depend upon him, and do our little best, leaving the event in his hand.

I cannot tell if you know any thing of Mrs. ——. In a letter I received yesterday, she writes thus:—"I am at present very ill with some disorder in my throat, which seems to threaten my life; but death or life, things present or things to come, all things are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's. O glorious privilege! precious foundation of soul-rest and peace, when all things about us are most troublous! Soon we shall be at home with Christ, where sin, sorrow, and death have no place; and in the meantime our Beloved will lead us through the wilderness. How safe, how joyous are we, may we be, in the most evil case!" If these should be some of the last notes of this swan, I think them worth preserving. May we not with good reason say, Who would not be a Christian? The Lord grant that you and I, Madam, and yours and mine, may be happy in the same assurance, when we shall have death and eternity near in view

I am, &c

LETTER II.

September —, 1764.

MY DEAR MADAM,

YOUR welfare I rejoice in; your warfare I understand something of. St. Paul describes his own case in few words, "Without were fightings, within were fears." Does not this comprehend all you would say? And how are you to know experimentally either your

own weakness, or the power, wisdom, and grace of God, seasonably and sufficiently afforded, but by frequent and various trials? How are the graces of patience, resignation, meekness, and faith, to be discovered and increased, but by exercise? The Lord has chosen, called, and armed us for the fight; and shall we wish to be excused? Shall we not rather rejoice that we have the honour to appear in such a cause, under such a captain, such a banner, and in such company? A complete suit of armour is provided, weapons not to be resisted, and precious balm to heal us if haply we receive a wound, and precious ointment to revive us when we are in danger of fainting. Further, we are assured of the victory beforehand; and O what a crown is prepared for every conqueror, which Jesus, the righteous Judge, the gracious Saviour, shall place upon every faithful head with his own hand! Then let us not be weary and faint, for in due season we shall reap. The time is short; yet a little while, and the struggle of indwelling sin, and the contradiction of surrounding sinners, shall be known no more. You are blessed, because you hunger and thirst after righteousness: he whose name is Amen has said you shall be filled. To claim the promise is to make it our own; yet it is becoming us to practise submission and patience, not in temporals only, but also in spirituals. We should be ashamed and grieved at our slow progress, so far as it is properly chargeable to our remissness and miscarriages; yet we must not expect to receive every thing at once, but wait for a gradual increase; nor should we forget to be thankful for what we may account a little in comparison of the much we suppose others have received. A little grace, a spark of true love to God, a grain of living faith, though small as mustard-seed, is worth a thousand worlds. One draught of the water of life gives interest in and earnest of the whole fountain. It becometh the Lord's people to be thankful; and to acknowledge his goodness in what we have received, is the surest as well as the pleasantest method of obtaining more. Nor should the grief arising from what we know and feel of our own hearts, rob us of the honour, comfort, and joy which the word of God designs us, in what is there recorded of the person, offices, and grace of Jesus, and the relations he is pleased to stand in to his people, Psal. xxiii. 1, Isa. liv. 5, Cant. v. 16, John xv. 15, 1 John, ii. 1, John xv. 1, Jer. xxiii. 5, 1 Cor. i. 30, Matth. i. 21—23. Give me leave to recommend to your consideration Psal. lxxxix. 15—18. These verses may be called the Believer's Triumph: though they are nothing in themselves, yet having all in Jesus, they may rejoice in his name all the day. The Lord enable us so to do! The joy of the Lord is the strength of his people; whereas unbelief makes our hands hang down, and our knees feeble, dispirits ourselves, and discourages others; and though it steals upon us under a semblance of humility, it is indeed the very essence of pride. By inward and outward exercises the Lord is promoting the best desire of your heart, and answering your daily prayers. Would you have assurance? The true solid assurance is to be obtained no other way. When young christians are greatly comforted with the Lord's love and presence, their doubts and fears are for that season at an end. But this is not assurance: so soon as the Lord hides his face, they are troubled, and ready to question the very foundation of hope. Assurance grows by repeated conflicts, by our repeated experimental proof of the Lord's power and goodness to save: when we have been brought very low and helped, sorely wounded and healed, cast down and raised again, have given up all hope, and been suddenly snatched from danger, and placed in safety, and when these things have been repeated to us and in us a thousand times over, we begin to learn to trust simply to the word and power of God, beyond and against appearances; and this trust, when habitual and strong, bears the name of assurance, for even assurance has degrees.

You have good reason, Madam, to suppose that the love of the best christians to an unseen Saviour is far short of what it ought to be. If your heart be like mine, and you examine your love to Christ by the warmth and frequency of your emotions towards him, you will often be in a sad suspense whether or no you love him at all. The best mark to judge, and which he has given us for that purpose, is to inquire if his word and will have a prevailing, governing influence upon our lives and temper. If we love him, we do endeavour to keep his commandments; and it will hold the other way, if we have a desire to please him we undoubtedly love him. Obedience is the best test; and when, amidst all our imperfections, we can humbly appeal concerning the sincerity of our views, this is a mercy for which we ought to be greatly thankful. He that has brought us to will, will likewise enable us to do according to his good pleasure. I doubt not but the Lord whom you love, and on whom you depend, will lead you in a sure way, and establish and strengthen, and settle you in his love and grace. Indeed he has done great things for you already. The Lord is your Shepherd;—a comprehensive word. The sheep can do nothing for themselves; the shepherd must guide, guard, feed, heal, recover. Well for us that our Shepherd is the Lord Almighty. If his power, care, compassion, fulness, were not infinite, the poor sheep would be forsaken, starved, and worried. But we have a Shepherd full of care, full of kindness, full of power, who has said, I will seek that which is lost, and bind up that which was broken, and bring again that

which was driven away, and will strengthen that which was sick. How tender are these expressions, and how well fulfilled! His sheep feed in the midst of wolves, yet are preserved safe; for though they see him not, his eyes and his heart are upon them. Do we wonder that Daniel was preserved in the lions den? Why, it is a common case. Which of God's children have not cause to say, "My soul is among lions?" But the Angel of the covenant stops their mouths, or only permits them to gape and roar, to shew their teeth, and what they would do if they might; but they may not, they shall not bite and tear us at their own will. Let us trust him, and all shall be well.

As to daily occurrences, it is best to believe that a daily portion of comforts and crosses, each one the most suitable to our case, is adjusted and appointed by the hand which was once nailed to the cross for us; that where the path of duty and prudence leads, there is the best situation we could possibly be in at that juncture. We are not required to afflict ourselves immoderately for what is not in our power to prevent, nor should any thing that affords occasions for mortifying the spirit of self be accounted unnecessary.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

1768.

I HAVE been for some time hoping to hear from you, but Mr. —— was here last Saturday, and informed me that you were ill, or had been so very lately. This intelligence prompted me to write as soon as I could find leisure. I think the Lord has seen fit to visit you with much indisposition of late; I say he has seen fit, for all our trials are under his immediate direction, and we are never in heaviness without a need be. I trust he does and will give you strength equal to your day, and sweeten what would be otherwise bitter with the essence of his precious love. I hope soon to hear that you are restored to health, and that you have found cause to praise him for the rod.

How happy is the state of a believer, to have a sure promise that all shall work together for good in the end, and in the mean time a sure refuge where to find present relief, support, and protection! How comfortable is it, when trouble is near, to know that the Lord is near likewise, and to commit ourselves and all our cares simply to him, believing that his eye is upon us, and his ear open to our prayers. Under the conduct of such a Shepherd we need not fear; though we are called to pass through fire and water, through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with us, and will shew himself mighty on our behalf. It seems almost needless to say, that we were very happy in the company of ——: the only inconvenience was, that it renewed the pain it always gives me to part with them. Though the visit was full as long as I could possibly expect, it seemed very short. This must be the case while we are here: our pleasures are short, interrupted, and mixed with troubles: this is not, cannot be our rest. But it will not be always the case; we are travelling to a better world, where every evil and imperfection shall cease; then we shall be for ever with the Lord and with each other. May the prospect of this blessed hope set before us revive our fainting spirits, and make us willing to endure hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Here we must often sow in tears, but there we shall reap in joy, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes for ever. I hope the conversation of friends whom I so greatly love and honour afforded me not only pleasure but profit; it left a savour upon my mind, and stirred up my languid desires after the Lord. I wish I could say the good effect has remained with me to this hour; but, alas! I am a poor creature, and have had many causes of humiliation since. But, blessed be God, amidst all my changes I find the foundation stands sure, and I am seldom or never left to doubt either of the Lord's love to me or the reality of the desires he has given me towards himself; though, when I measure my love by the degrees of its exercise, or the fruits it produceth, I have reason to sit down ashamed, as the chief of sinners and the least of all saints. But in him I have righteousness and peace, and in him I must and will rejoice.

I would willingly fill up my sheet, but feel a straitness in my spirit, and know not what farther to say. O for a ray of divine light to set me at liberty, that I might write a few lines worth reading, something that might warm my heart, and comfort yours. Then the subject must be Jesus; but of him what can I say that you do not know? Well, though you know him, you are glad to hear of him again and again. Come, then, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. Let us adore him for his love, that love which has a height, and depth, and length, and breadth, beyond the grasp of our poor conceptions; a love that moved him to empty himself, to take on him the form of a servant, and to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; a love that pitied us in our lost estate, that found us when we sought him not, that spoke peace to our souls in the day of our distress; a love that bears with all our present weakness, mistakes, backslidings, and shortcomings; a love that is always watchful, always ready to guide, to comfort, and to heal; a

love that will not be wearied, cannot be conquered, and is incapable of changes; a love that will, in the end, prevail over all opposition, will perfect that which concerns us, and will not leave us till it has brought us perfect in holiness and happiness, to rejoice in his presence in glory. The love of Christ! it is the wonder, the joy, the song, of angels, and the sense of it shed abroad in our hearts, makes life pleasant, and death welcome.—Alas! what a heart have I, that I love him no better! But I hope he has given me a desire to make him my all in all, and to account every thing loss and dross that dares to stand in competition with him.

I am, &c.

LETTER. IV.

1769.

I FOUND, this morning, among my unanswered letters, one from you, but I hope I left it among them by mistake. I am willing, however, to be on the sure side, and would rather write twice than be too long silent. I heard of your being laid on the bed of affliction, and of the Lord's goodness to you there, and of his raising you up again. Blessed be his name! he is all-sufficient and faithful; and though he cause grief, he is sure to shew compassion in supporting and delivering. Ah! the evil of our nature is deeply rooted and very powerful, or such repeated, continual corrections and chastisements would not be necessary, and were they not necessary we should not have them. But such we are, and therefore such must be our treatment; for though the Lord loves us with a tenderness beyond what the mother feels for her sucking child, yet it is a tenderness directed by infinite wisdom, and very different from that weak indulgence which in parents we call fondness, which leads them to comply with their children's desires and inclinations, rather than to act with a steady view to their true welfare. The Lord loves his children, and is very indulgent to them, so far as they can safely bear it, but he will not spoil them. Their sin-sickness requires medicines, some of which are very unpalatable; but when the case calls for such, no short-sighted entreaties of ours can excuse us from taking what he prepares for our good. But every dose is prepared by his own hand, and not one is administered in vain, nor is it repeated any oftener than is needful to answer the proposed end. Till then, no other hand can remove what he lays upon us; but when his merciful design is answered, he will relieve us himself, and in the mean time, he will so moderate the operation, or increase our ability to bear, that we shall not be overpowered. It is true, without a single exception, that all his paths are mercy and truth to them that fear him. His love is the same when he wounds as when he heals, when he takes away as when he gives: we have reason to thank him for all, but most for the severe.

I received a letter from you, which mentions dear Mrs. ———'s case, a very trying one; but in this likewise we see the Lord's faithfulness. Our own experience, and all that we observe of his dealings with others, may convince us that we need not be afraid to entrust ourselves and our dearest concerns in his hands; for he can and will make every thing work for good.

How little does the world know of that intercourse which is carried on between heaven and earth! what petitions are daily presented, and what answers are received, at the throne of grace! O the blessed privilege of prayer! O the wonderful love, care, attention, and power of our great Shepherd! His eye is always upon us; when our spirits are almost overwhelmed within us, he knoweth our path. His ear is always open to us; let who will overlook and disappoint us, he will not. When means and hope fail, when every thing looks dark upon us, when we seem shut up on every side, when we are brought to the lowest ebb, still our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. To him all things are possible; and before the exertion of his power, when he is pleased to arise and work, all hindrances give way, and vanish like a mist before the sun. And he can so manifest himself to the soul, and cause his goodness to pass before it, that the hour of affliction shall be the golden hour of the greatest consolation He is the fountain of life, strength, grace, and comfort, and of his fulness his children receive according to their occasions: but this is all hidden from the world; they have no guide in prosperity, but hurry on as they are instigated by their blinded passions, and are perpetually multiplying mischiefs and miseries to themselves; and in adversity they have no resource, but must feel all the evil of affliction, without inward support, and without deriving any advantage from it. We have, therefore, cause for continual praise. The Lord has given us to know his name, as a resting-place and a hiding-place, a sun and a shield. Circumstances and creatures may change; but he will be an unchangeable friend. The way is rough, but he trod it before us, and is now with us in every step we take; and every step brings us nearer to our heavenly home. Our inheritance is surely reserved for us, and we shall be kept for it by his power through faith. Our present strength is small, and, without a fresh supply, would be quickly exhausted; but he has engaged to renew it from day to day; and he will soon appear, to wipe all tears from our eyes; and then we shall appear with him in glory

I am very sorry if our friend Mr. —— appears to be aiming to reconcile things that are incompatible. I am, indeed, afraid that he has been for some time under a decline; and, as you justly observe, we meet with too many instances to teach us, that they who express the warmest zeal at their first setting out, do not always prove the most steady and thriving afterwards; yet I am willing to hope in this case, that he will revive and flourish again. Sometimes the Lord permits those whom he loves to wander from him for a season; and when his time comes to heal their backslidings, they walk more humbly, thankfully, and fruitfully afterwards, from a sense of his abounding mercy, and the knowledge they have by experience acquired of the deceitfulness and ingratitude of their hearts. I hope and pray it will be so with him. However, these things for the present are grievous; and usually before the Lord heals such breaches, he makes his people sensible, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, to forsake him when he led them by the way.

Indeed, London is a dangerous and ensnaring place to professors. I account myself happy that my lot is cast at a distance from it. It appears to me like a sea, wherein most are tossed by storms, and many suffer shipwreck. In this retired situation, I seem to stand upon a cliff; and while I pity those whom I cannot help, I hug myself in the thoughts of being safe upon the shore. Not that we are without our trials here; the evil of our own hearts, and the devices of Satan, cut us out work enough; but we are happily screened from many things which must be either burdensome or hurtful to those who live in the way of them; such as, political disputes, winds of doctrine, scandals of false professors, parties for and against particular ministers, and fashionable amusements, in some measure countenanced by the presence of persons in other respects exemplary. In this view, I often think of our dear friend's expression, upon a certain occasion, of the difference between London and country grace. I hold it in a twofold sense. By London grace, when genuine, I understand grace in a very advanced degree. The favoured few who are kept alive to God, simple-hearted, and spiritually-minded (I mean especially in genteel life), in the midst of such snares and temptations, appear to me to be the first rate christians of the land: I adore the power of the Lord in them, and compare them to the young men who walked unhurt in the midst of the fire. In another sense, the phrase *London grace* conveys no great idea to me. I think there is no place in the kingdom where a person may set up for a professor upon a smaller stock. If people can abstain from open immoralities, if they will fly to all parts of the town to hear sermons, if they can talk about the doctrines of the gospel, if they have something to say upon that useless question, Who is the best preacher? if they can attain to a speaking acquaintance with some of an acknowledged character, then they expect to pass muster. I am afraid there are many who, upon no better evidences than these, deceive both themselves and others for a course of years. Though I feel not in a writing cue to-day, I have almost filled the sheet somehow; and if a line or a word may be a means of suggesting a seasonable and comfortable thought to you, I have my end. Through mercy we are all pretty well. My soul is kept alive, as it were, by miracle. I feel much inward warfare: the enemy thrusts sore at me, that I may fall; and I have abundant experience of the evil and deceitfulness of my heart; but the Lord is gracious, and, in the midst of all conflicts, I have a peace springing from the knowledge of his power and grace, and a consideration that I have been helped to commit myself to him.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

1769.

We are much obliged to you for your late visit; and I am glad to find that the Lord is pleased to give you some tokens of his presence when you are with us, because I hope it will encourage you to come again. I ought to be very thankful that our christian friends in general are not wholly disappointed of a blessing when they visit us.

I hope the Lord will give me an humble sense of what I am, and that broken and contrite frame of heart in which he delights. This is to me the chief thing. I had rather have more of the mind that was in Christ, more of a meek, quiet, resigned, peaceful, and loving disposition, than to enjoy the greatest measure of sensible comforts, if the consequence should be (as perhaps it would) spiritual pride, self-sufficiency, and a want of that tenderness to others which becomes one who has reason to style himself the chief of sinners. I know, indeed, that the proper tendency of sensible consolations is to humble; but I can see, that, through the depravity of human nature, they have not always that effect. And I have been sometimes disgusted with an apparent want of humility, an air of self-will and self-importance, in persons of whose sincerity I could not at all doubt. It has kept me from envying them those pleasant frames with which they have sometimes been favoured; for I believe Satan is never nearer us than at some times when we think ourselves nearest the Lord.

What reason have we to charge our souls in David's words, "My soul, wait thou only upon God." A great stress should be laid

upon that word only. We dare not entirely shut him out of our regards but we are too apt to suffer something to share with him. This evil disposition is deeply fixed in our hearts; and the Lord orders all his dispensations towards us with a view to rooting it out; that, being wearied with repeated disappointments, we may at length be compelled to betake ourselves to him alone. Why else do we experience so many changes and crosses? why are we so often in heaviness? We know that he delights in the pleasure and prosperity of his servants; that he does not willingly afflict or grieve his children; but there is a necessity on our parts, in order to teach us that we have no stability in ourselves, and that no creature can do us good but by his appointment. While the people of Israel depended upon him for food, they gathered up the manna every morning in the field; but when they would hoard it up in their houses, that they might have a stock within themselves, they had it without his blessing, and it proved good for nothing; it soon bred worms, and grew offensive. We may often observe something like this occur both in our temporal and spiritual concerns. The Lord gives us a dear friend to our comfort; but ere long we forget that the friend is only the channel of conveyance, and that all the comfort is from himself. To remind us of this, the stream is dried up, the friend torn away by death, or removed far from us, or perhaps the friendship ceases, and a coolness insensibly takes place, we know not how or why: the true reason is, that when we rejoice amiss in our gourd, the Lord, for our good, sends a worm to the root of it. Instances of this kind are innumerable; and the great inference from them all is, Cease from man, cease from creatures, for wherein are they to be accounted of? My soul, wait thou only, only upon the Lord, who is (according to the expressive phrase, Heb. iv. 13.) he with whom we have to do for soul and body, for time and eternity. What thanks do we owe, that though we have not yet attained perfectly this great lesson, yet we are admitted into that school where alone it can be learned! and though we are poor, slow scholars, the great and effectual Teacher to whom we have been encouraged and enabled to apply, can and will bring us forward! He communicates not only instructions, but capacities and powers. There is none like him; he can make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak: and how great is his condescension and patience! how does he accommodate himself to our weakness, and teach us as we are able to bear. Though all are very dunces when he first receives them, not one was ever turned out as incapable, for he makes them what he would have them to be. O that we may set him always before us, and consider every dispensation, person, thing, we meet in the course of every day, as messengers from him, each bringing us some line of instruction for us to copy into that day's experience. Whatever passes within us or around us may be improved (when he teaches us how) as a perpetual commentary upon his good word. If we converse and observe with this view, we may learn something every moment, wherever the path of duty leads us, in the streets as well as in the closet, and from the conversation of those who know not God (when we cannot avoid being present at it), as well as from those who do.

Separation of dear friends is, as you observed, hard to flesh and blood; but grace can make it tolerable. I have an abiding persuasion, that the Lord can easily give more than ever he will take away. Which part of the alternative must be my lot, or when, he only knows; but in general I can rely on him to appoint the time, the manner; and I trust his promise of strength suited to the day shall be made good. Therefore I can for the most part rejoice, that all things are in the hand and under the direction of Him who knows our frame, and has himself borne our griefs and carried our sorrows in his own body. A time of weeping must come, but the morning of joy will make amends for all. Who can expound the meaning of that one expression, "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" The case of unconverted friends is still more burdensome to think of; but we have encouragement and warrant to pray and to hope He who called us can easily call others; and he seldom lays a desire of this sort very closely and warmly upon the hearts of his people, but when it is his gracious design sooner or later to give an answer of peace. However, it becomes us to be thankful for ourselves, and to bow our anxieties and reasonings before his sovereign will, who doth as he pleases with his own.

Methinks winter is your summer. You have been, like the bee, collecting from many flowers; I hope you will carry good store of honey home with you. May you find the Lord there, and he can easily supply the failure of means and creatures. We cannot be in any place to so much advantage as where the call of duty leads. What we cannot avoid, may we cheerfully submit to, and not indulge a vain thought, that we could chuse a better situation for ourselves (all things considered) than he has chosen for us.

When we have opportunity of enjoying many ordinances, it is a mercy to be able to prize and improve them; but when he cuts us short for a season, if we wait upon him, we shall do well without them. Secret prayer, and the good word, are the chief wells from whence we draw the water of salvation. These will keep the soul alive when creature-streams are cut off; but the richest variety of public means, and the closest attendance upon them will leave us lean and pining in the midst of

plenty, if we are remiss and formal in the other two. I think David never appears in a more lively frame of mind than when he wrote the 42d, 63d, and 84th Psalms, which were all penned in a dry land, and at a distance from the public ordinances.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

1772.

I HAD been wishing to hear from you, that I might know where to write. I hope I can assure you of a friendly sympathy with you in your trials. I can, in some measure, guess at what you feel, from what I have seen and felt myself in cases where I have been nearly concerned. But my compassion, though sincere, is ineffectual: if I can pity I cannot relieve. All I can do is, as the Lord enables me, to remember you both before him. But there is one whose compassion is infinite. The love, and tenderness of ten thousand earthly friends, of ten thousand mothers towards their sucklings, if compared with his, are less than a drop of water to the ocean; and his power is infinite too. Why then do our sufferings continue, when he is so compassionate, and could remove them with a word? Surely, if we cannot give the particular reasons (which yet he will acquaint us with hereafter, John xiii. 7.), the general reason is at hand; he afflicts not for his own pleasure, but for our profit; to make us partakers of his holiness, and because he loves us.

> Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust him for his grace;
> Behind a frowning providence
> He hides a smiling face.

I wish you much comfort from David's thought, Psal. cxlii. 3. "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, thou knewest my path." The Lord is not withdrawn to a great distance, but his eye is upon you, and he sees you not with the indifference of a mere spectator, but he observes with attention; he knows, he considers your path; yea, he appoints it, and every circumstance about it is under his direction. Your trouble began at the hour he saw best; it could not come before, and he has marked the degeee of it to a hair's-breadth and the duration to a minute. He knows likewise how your spirit is affected; and such supplies of grace and strength, and in such seasons as he sees needful, he will afford. So that when things appear darkest, you shall still be able to say, Though chastened, not killed. Therefore hope in God, for you shall yet praise him.

I shall pray that the Bath waters may be beneficial; and that the waters of the sanctuary there may be healing and enlivening to you all. Our all-sufficient God can give seasons of refreshment in the darkest hours, and break through the thickest clouds of outward affliction or distress. To you it is given, not only to believe in Jesus, but to suffer for his sake: for so we do, not only when we are called to follow him to imprisonment or death, but when he enables us to bear afflictive dispensations with due submission and patience. Then he is glorified; then his grace and power are manifested in us. The world, so far as they know our case, have a proof before them, that our religion is not merely notional, but that there is a power and reality in it. And the Lord's people are encouraged by what they see of his faithfulness to ourselves. And there are more eyes upon us still. We are a spectacle to the universe, to angels as well as to men. Cheer up: the Lord hath put you in your present trying situation, that you may have the fairer opportunity of adorning your profession of the gospel; and though you suffer much, he is able to make you abundant amends. Nor need I remind you, that he has suffered unspeakably more for you; he drank for your sakes a cup of unmixed wrath, and only puts into your hand a cup of affliction mixed with many mercies.

The account you gave of the poor man detained in the inn was very affecting. Such scenes are, or should be instructive, to teach us resignation under the trials we must meet with every day. For not only are we visited less than our iniquities have deserved, but much less than many of our fellow-creatures daily meet with. We need not look about for, or long to find, others in a worse situation than ourselves. If a fit of the gout or cholic is so grievous and so hard to bear, what do we owe to him who delivered us from that place of unutterable torment, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever, without hope or respite? And if we cannot help interesting ourselves in the groans of a stranger, how ought the groans of Jesus to be, as it were, continually sounding in our ears? What are all other sufferings compared to his? and yet he endured them freely. He needed not to have borne them, if he would have left us to perish; but such was his love, he died that we might live, and endured the fiercest agonies, that he might open to us the gate of everlasting peace and happiness. How amazingly perverse is my heart, that I can be more affected with a melancholy story in a newspaper concerning persons I never saw, than with all that I read of his bitter passion in the garden and on the cross, though I profess to believe he endured it all for me! O! if we could always behold him by faith as evidently crucified before our eyes, how would it compose our spirits as to all the streets and bitters of this poor life! What a barrier would it prove against all the snares and temptations whereby Satan would draw us into evil; and

what firm ground of confidence would it afford us amidst the conflicts we sustain from the workings of unbelief and indwelling sin! I long for more of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, that I may be preserved humble, thankful, watchful, and dependent. To behold the glory and the love of Jesus, is the only effectual way to participate of his image.

We are to set out to-night from the interpreter's house towards the hill difficulty, and hope to be favoured with a sight of the cross by the way. To stand at the foot of it, with a softened heart and melting eyes; to forget our sins, sorrows, and burdens, while we are wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of him who bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, is certainly the most desirable situation on this side the grave. To speak of it, and to see it by the light of the Spirit, are widely different things; and though we cannot always enjoy this view, yet the remembrance of what we have seen is an excellent means of encouragement to mount the hill, and to face the lions.

I believe I shall hardly find leisure to fill my paper this time. It is now Saturday evening, and growing late. I am just returned from a serious walk, which is my usual manner of closing the week, when the weather is fine. I endeavour to join in heart with the Lord's ministers and people, who are seeking a blessing on to-morrow's ordinances. At such times I especially remember those friends with whom I have gone to the house of the Lord in company, consequently you are not forgot. I can venture to assure you, that if you have a value for our prayers, you have a frequent share in them, yea, are loved and remembered by many here; but as we are forgetful creatures, I hope you will always refresh our memory, and quicken our prayers, by a yearly visit. In the morning I shall think of you again. What a multitude of eyes and hearts will be directed to our Redeemer to-morrow! He has a numerous and necessitous family, but he is rich enough to supply them all, and his tender compassions extend to the meanest and most unworthy. Like the sun, he can cheer and enlighten thousands and millions at once, and give to each as bountifully as if there were no more to partake of his favour. His best blessings are not diminished by being shared among many. The greatest earthly monarch would soon be poor if he was to give a little (though but a little) to all his subjects; but Jesus has unsearchable, inexhaustible riches of grace to bestow. The innumerable assembly before the throne have been all supplied from his fulness, and yet there is enough and to spare for us also, and for all that shall come after us. May he give us an eager appetite, a hunger and thirst that will not be put off with any thing short of the bread of life; and then we may confidently open our mouths wide, for he has promised to fill them

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

1773.

SINCE I wrote last, the Lord has been gracious to us here. He crowned the last year with his goodness, and renews his benefits to us every day. He has been pleased to bless the preaching of his gospel amongst us, both to consolation and conviction; and several are, I hope, earnestly seeking him, who were lately dead in trespasses and sins. Dear Mr.—— was released from all his complaints on the 25th of November. A few days before his death he was enabled to speak more intelligibly than usual for about a quarter of an hour, and expressed a comfortable hope, which was a great satisfaction to us; for though we had not the least doubt of his being built upon the Rock, it was to us an answer to prayer that he could again speak the language of faith; and much prayer had been made on this account, especially that very evening. After that night he spoke little, and hardly took any notice, but continued chiefly drowsy till he died. I preached his funeral sermon, from Lam. iii. 31—33. Mrs. L——'s complaint grows worse and worse; she suffers much in her body, and has much more perhaps to suffer: but her consolations in the Lord abound. He enables her to maintain faith, patience, and submission, in an exemplary manner, and shews us, in his dealings with her, that he is all-sufficient and faithful to those who put their trust in him. I am glad to hear that you had comfortable seasons while at Bath. It is, indeed, a great mercy that God's ordinances are established in that place of dissipation; and I hope many who go there with no higher view than to drink the Bath waters, will be brought to draw with joy the waters of life from those wells of salvation. He does nothing in vain, and when he affords the means, we may confidently hope he will bestow the blessing. The dissipation of spirit you complain of, when you are in a strange place, is, I suppose, felt by most, if not by all, who can be satisfied in no place without some token of the Lord's presence. I consider it rather as an infirmity than a sin, strictly speaking; though all our infirmities are sinful, being the effects of a depraved nature. In our present circumstances new things excite new ideas, and when our usual course of life is broken in upon, it disjoints and unsettles our thoughts. It is a proof of our weakness; it may, and ought to be, lamented; but I believe we shall not get the better of it, till we leave the mortal body to moulder into

dust. Perhaps few suffer more inconveniences from this article than myself, which is one reason why I love home, and seldom leave it without some reluctance; and it is one reason why we should love heaven, and long for the hour when, at liberty from all incumbrance, we shall see the Lord without a vail, and serve him without distraction. The Lord, by his providence, seconds and confirms the declarations of his word and ministry. Much we read and much we hear concerning the emptiness, vanity, and uncertainty of the present state. When our minds are enlightened by his Holy Spirit, we receive and acknowledge what his word declares to be truth; yet if we remain long without changes, and our path is very smooth, we are for the most part but faintly affected with what we profess to believe. But when some of our dearest friends are taken from us, the lives of others threatened, and we ourselves are brought low with pain and sickness, then we not only say, but feel, that this must not, cannot, be our rest. You have had several exercises of this kind of late in your family, and I trust you will be able to set your seal to that gracious word, That though afflictions in themselves are not joyous, but grievous, yet in due season they yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness. Various and blessed are the fruits they produce. By affliction prayer is quickened, for our prayers are very apt to grow languid and formal in a time of ease. Affliction greatly helps us to understand the scriptures, especially the promises, most of which being made to times of trouble, we cannot so well know their fulness, sweetness, and certainty, as when we have been in the situation to which they are suited, have been enabled to trust and plead them, and found them fulfilled in our own case. We are usually indebted to affliction as the means or occasion of the most signal discoveries we are favoured with of the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of the Lord. These are best observed by the evident proofs we have that he is near to support us under trouble, and that he can, and does, deliver us out of it. Israel would not have seen so much of the Lord's arm outstretched in their behalf, had not Pharaoh oppressed, opposed, and pursued them. Afflictions are designed likewise for the manifestation of our sincerity to ourselves and to others. When faith endures the fire, we know it to be of the right kind; and others, who see we are brought safe out, and lose nothing but the dross, will confess that God is with us of a truth, Dan. iii. 27, 28. Surely this thought should reconcile us to suffer, not only with patience, but with cheerfulness, if God may be glorified in us. This made the apostle rejoice in tribulation, that the power of Christ might be noticed, as resting upon him, and working mightily in him. Many of our graces, likewise, cannot thrive or shew themselves to advantage without trials, such as resignation, patience, meekness, long-suffering. I observe some of the London porters do not appear to be very strong men, yet they will trudge along under a burden which some stouter people could not carry so well; the reason is, that they are accustomed to carry burdens, and by continual exercise their shoulders acquire a strength suited to their work. It is so in the christian life; activity and strength of grace is not ordinarily acquired by those who sit still and live at ease, but by those who frequently meet with something which requires a full exertion of what power the Lord has given them. So again, it is by our own sufferings we learn to pity and sympathize with others in their sufferings; such a compassionate disposition, which excites our feelings for the afflicted, is an eminent branch of the mind which was in Christ. But these feelings would be very faint, if we did not in our experience know what sorrows and temptations mean. Afflictions do us good likewise, as they make us more acquainted with what is in our own hearts, and thereby promote humiliation and self-abasement. There are abominations which, like nests of vipers, lie so quietly within, that we hardly suspect they are there, till the rod of affliction rouses them: then they hiss and shew their venom. This discovery is, indeed, very distressing; yet, till it is made, we are prone to think ourselves much less vile than we really are, and cannot so heartily abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

But I must write a sermon rather than a letter, if I would enumerate all the good fruits which, by the power of sanctifying grace, are produced from this bitter tree. May we, under our several trials, find them all revealed in ourselves, that we may not complain of having suffered in vain. While we have such a depraved nature, and live in such a polluted world; while the roots of pride, vanity, self-dependence, self-seeking, are so strong within us, we need a variety of sharp dispensations to keep us from forgetting ourselves, and from cleaving to the dust.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

1774.

THE very painful illness which Mrs. ——— so long endured, had, doubtless, not only prepared you to expect the news of her dismission, but made you more willing to resign her. You are bereaved of a valuable friend; but life in her circumstances was burdensome; and who can be sorry to consider her now as freed from all suffering, and possessed of all happiness? But, besides this, I trust the Lord has favoured you with an habitual sense of the wisdom

and propriety of all his appointments; so that when his will is manifested by the event, you are enabled to say, "All is well." "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." She is but gone a little before you; and after a few more changes, you will meet her again to unspeakable advantage, and rejoice together before the throne for ever. There every tear will be wiped away, and you shall weep no more. The Lord could have prevented the cause of her great sufferings; but I doubt not he afflicted her in wisdom and mercy: he could easily have restored her to health; but the time was hastening when he purposed to have her with him where he is, that she might behold his glory, and have all the desires he put into her heart abundantly satisfied. Precious in his sight is the death of his saints, and every circumstance is under the direction of infinite wisdom. His sovereignty forbids us to say, Why hast thou done this? and his love assures us that he does all things well. I have lost a friend likewise. I believe I may say few persons not immediately related to her, could value her more highly than myself; and though of late years I could not have the pleasure of her company, it was a constant satisfaction to me to know I had such a friend.

Mr. T——'s sickness and death followed immediately upon this stroke. I doubt not but you have been much affected with this dispensation likewise. But here again we have the same stronghold to retreat to: The Lord has done it. What a pleasing prospect of increasing usefulness is now interrupted! How many will mourn his loss! Yet we are sure the work which the Lord had appointed him was finished. They who loved his ministry, and were profited by it, are left apparently destitute; but Jesus, the good Shepherd, is able to take care of his own, and will fulfil his promise to them all. He has said, Verily they shall be fed.

We have had trying and dying times here; half my time almost has been taken up with visiting the sick. I have seen death in a variety of forms, and have had frequent occasion of observing how insignificant many things which are now capable of giving us pain or pleasure, will appear, when the soul is brought near to the borders of eternity. All the concerns which relate solely to this life, will then be found as trivial as the traces of a dream from which we are awakened. Nothing will then comfort us but the knowledge of Jesus and his love; nothing grieve us but the remembrance of our unfaithful carriage to him, and what poor returns we made to his abundant goodness. The Lord forbid that this thought should break our peace! No, faith in his name may forbid our fear, though we shall see and confess we have been unprofitable servants. There shall be no condemnation to them that are in him; but surely shame and humiliation will accompany us to the very threshold of heaven, and ought to do so. I surely shall then be more affected than I am now with the coolness of my love, the faintness of my zeal, the vanity of my heart, and my undue attachment to the things of time. O these clogs, fetters, vales, and mountains, which obstruct my course, darken my views, slacken my pace, and disable me in service. Well it is for me that I am not under the law, but under grace.

To-morrow is the Sabbath. I am usually glad when it returns, though it seldom finds me in that frame of mind which I would desire. But it is my happiness to live amongst many who count the hours from one ordinance to another. I know they pray that I may be a messenger of peace, and an instrument of good to their souls; and I have cause to hope their prayers are in a measure answered. For their sakes, as much as my own, I am glad to go up to the house of the Lord. O that in watering others, I may be also watered myself! I have been praying that to-morrow may be a day of power with you and with us, and with all that love Jesus in sincerity; that we may see his glory, and taste his love in the sanctuary. When it is thus, the Sabbath is a blessed day indeed, an earnest of heaven. There they keep an everlasting Sabbath, and cease not night or day admiring the riches of redeeming love, and adoring him who washed his people from their sins in his own blood. To have such imperfect communion with them as is in this state attainable in this pleasing exercise, is what alone can make life worth the name. For this I sigh and long, and cry to the Lord to rend the vail of unbelief, scatter the clouds of ignorance, and break down the walls which sin is daily building up to hide him from my eyes. I hope I can say, my soul is athirst for God, and nothing less than the light of his countenance can satisfy me. Blessed be his name for the desire; it is his own gift, and he never gives it in vain. He will afford us a taste of the water of life by the way; and ere long we shall drink abundantly at the fountain head, and have done with complaint for ever. May we be thankful for what we receive, and still earnestly desirous of more.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MISS D——.

LETTER I.

August —, 1772.

MY DEAR MISS,

THE Lord brought us home in peace. My visit to ——— was agreeable, and I shall often think of it with pleasure, though the deadness and dryness of my own spirit a good part of the time I was there proved a considerable abatement. I am eager enough to converse with the Lord's people, when at the same time I am backward and indisposed to communion with the Lord himself. The two evils charged upon Israel of old, a proneness to forsake the fountain of living waters and to trust to broken cisterns (which can do me no good unless he supplies them), run through the whole of my experience abroad and at home. A few drops of grace in my fellow-worms endear them to me exceedingly. If I expect to see any christian friends, I count the hours till we meet, and promise myself great benefit; but if the Lord withdraws his influence, the best of them prove to me but clouds without water. It was not, however, wholly so with me all the time I staid with my friends, but I suffer much in learning to depend upon the Lord alone. I have been at this lesson many a long year, but am so poor and dull a scholar, that I have not yet made any tolerable progress in it. I think I received some instruction and advantage where I little expected it; I mean at Mr. Cox's Museum. The efforts of his ingenuity amazed me, while at the same time I was struck with their insignificance. His fine things were curious beyond all I had any idea of; and yet, what are they better than toys and amusement, suited to the taste of children! And notwithstanding the variety of their motions they were all destitute of life. There is unspeakably more wisdom and contrivance in the mechanism of a butterfly or a bee, that flies unnoticed in the fields, than in all his apparatus put together. But the works of God are disregarded, while the feeble imitations of them which men can produce gain universal applause.

If you and I could make self-moving dragons and elephants, what would it profit us? Blessed be God, that he has given us some glimpses of his wisdom and love, by which our hearts, more hard and lifeless by nature than the stones in the streets, are constrained and enabled to move upwards, and to seek after the Lord. He has given us in his word a greater treasure than all that we ever beheld with our eyes, and a hope which shall flourish when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up. What will all the fine things of men's device be worth in that day?

I think the passage you refer to in Mr. —— justly exceptionable. His intention is good, and the mistake he would censure very dangerous, but he might have explained himself more clearly. I apprehend he and you do not mean the same thing by being in the dark. It is not an uncomfortable, but a careless frame which he would censure. They who walk in darkness and see no light, and yet are exhorted to stay themselves upon God (Isa. l. 10), are said to hearken to the voice of his servant. Though they cannot see the Lord, they are seeking and mourning after him, and waiting in the use of means, and warring against sin. Mr. —— had another set of people in view, who trust in the notions of gospel-truth, or some past convictions and comforts, though at present they give no evidence of spiritual desires, but are worldly in their spirit and conversation; talk of trusting in the Lord; account it a weakness to doubt of their state, and think all is well because they profess to believe the doctrines of grace. In a word, it is the darkness of sin and sloth against which his observation is pointed. Or if, indeed, he meant more than

this, we are not obliged to believe him. Remember your privilege; you have the Bible in your hands, and are not bound to follow books or preachers any farther than what they deliver agrees with the oracles of truth. We have great reason to be thankful for the instructions and writings of spiritual men, but they are all fallible even as ourselves. One is our master, even Christ: what he says we are to receive implicitly; but we do not owe implicit subjection to the best of our fellow-creatures. The Bereans were commended that they would not take even the apostle Paul upon trust, but searched the scriptures to see whether these things were so. May the Lord give us a spirit of humility and discernment in all things!

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

May 4, 1773.

METHINKS it is high time to ask you how you do, to thank you for your last letter, and to let you know, that though necessity makes me slack in writing, yet I can and do often think of you. My silence has sometimes been owing to want of leisure; and sometimes when I could have found leisure, my harp has been out of tune, and I had no heart to write. Perhaps you are ready to infer, by my sitting down to write at last, that my harp is now well tuned, and I have something extraordinary to offer: beware of thinking so, lest you should be sadly disappointed. Should I make myself the subject, I could give you at present but a mournful ditty. I suppose you have heard I have been ill: through mercy I am now well. But indeed I must farther tell you, that when I was sick I was well; and since the Lord has removed my illness, I have been much worse. My illness was far from violent in itself, and was greatly sweetened by a calm submissive frame the Lord gave me under it. My heart seemed more alive to him then than it has done since my cough, fever, and deafness have been removed. Shall I give you another bit of a riddle, that, notwithstanding the many changes I pass through, I am always the same? This is the very truth: "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" so that, if sometimes my spirit is in a measure humble, lively, and dependent, it is not because I am grown better than I was, but the Lord is pleased to put forth his gracious power in my weakness; and when my heart is dry and stupid, when I can find no pleasure in waiting upon God, it is not because I am worse than I was before, but only the Lord sees it best that I should feel as well as say what a poor creature I am. My heart was once like a dungeon, out of the reach of day, and always dark: the Lord, by his grace, has been pleased to make this dungeon a room, by putting windows in it; but I need not tell you, that though windows will transmit the day-light into a room, they cannot supply the want of it. When the day is gone, windows are of little use: when the day returns, the room is enlightened by them again. Thus, unless the Lord shines, I cannot retain to-day the light I had yesterday; and though his presence makes a delightful difference, I have no more to boast of in myself at one time than another; yet when it is dark, I am warranted to expect the return of light again. When he is with me, all goes on pleasantly; when he withdraws, I find I can do nothing without him. I need not wonder that I find it so, for it must be so of course, if I am what I confess myself to be, a poor, helpless, sinful creature in myself. Nor need I be over-much discouraged, since the Lord has promised to help those who can do nothing without him, not those who can make a tolerable shift to help themselves. Through mercy he does not so totally withdraw, as to leave me without any power or will to cry for his return. I hope he maintains in me at all times a desire of his presence; yet it becomes me to wait for him with patience, and to live upon his faithfulness, when I can feel nothing but evil in myself.

In your letter, after having complained of your inability, you say, you converse with many who find it otherwise, who can go whenever they will to the Father of mercies with a child-like confidence, and never return without an answer, an answer of peace. If they only mean that they are favoured with an established faith, and can see that the Lord is always the same, and that their right to the blessings of the covenant is not at all affected by their unworthiness, I wish you and I had more experience of the same privilege. In general, the Lord helps me to aim at it, though I find it sometimes difficult to hold fast my confidence. But if they speak absolutely with respect to their frames, that they not only have something to support them under their changes, but meet with no changes that require such support, I must say, it is well that they do not live here; if they did, they would not know how to pity us, and we should not know how to understand them. We have an enemy at —— that fights against our peace, and I know not one amongst us but often groans under the warfare. I advise you not to be troubled by what you hear of other folk's experience, but keep close to the written word, where you will meet with much to encourage you, though you often feel yourself weary and heavy laden. For my own part, I like that path best which is well beaten by the footsteps of the flock, though it is not always pleasant, and strewed with flowers. In our way, we find some hills, from whence we can cheerfully look about us; but we meet with

deep valleys likewise, and seldom travel long upon even ground.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

1775.

I AM satisfied with your answer to my question: we are not proper judges of each other's circumstances, and I am in some measure weaned from judging hastily, that what would not be convenient for me, must therefore necessarily be wrong for another. However, my solicitude for your welfare made me venture to drop a hint, as I was persuaded you would take it in good part. Indeed, all situations and circumstances (supposing them not sinful in themselves, and that we are lawfully placed in them) are nearly alike. In London I am in a crowd; in the country I am sure there is a crowd in me. To what purpose do I boast of retirement, when I am pestered by a legion in every place? How often, when I am what I call alone, may my mind be compared to a puppet-show, a fair, a Newgate, or any of those scenes where folly, noise, and wickedness most abound? On the contrary, sometimes I have enjoyed sweet recollection and composure where I could have hardly expected it. But still, though the power be all of the Lord, and we of ourselves can do nothing, it is both our duty and our wisdom to be attentive to the use of appointed means on the one hand, and on the other, watchful against those things which we find, by experience, have a tendency to damp our fervour, or to dissipate our spirits. A comfortable intimacy with a fellow-worm cannot be maintained without a certain delicacy and circumspection, a studiousness in improving opportunities of pleasing, and in avoiding what is known to be offensive. For though love will make large allowances for involuntary mistakes, it cannot easily brook a slight. We act thus as it were by instinct towards those whom we dearly love, and to whom we feel ourselves greatly obliged: and happy are they who are most influenced by this sentiment in their walk before the Lord. But, alas! here we are chargeable with such inconsistencies as we should be greatly ashamed of in common life. And well it is for us that the Lord's thoughts and ways are above ours, and that he is infinite in mercy as well as in power; for surely our dearest friends would have been weary of us, and have renounced us long ago, had we behaved to them as we have too often done to him. He is God, and not man, and therefore he still waits to be gracious, though we have so often trifled with him. Surely we may well say with the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!" His tenderness and forbearance towards his own people (whose sins being committed against love, and light, and experience, are more aggravated than others) is astonishing indeed. But oh! may the times past suffice to have grieved his Spirit, and may we be enabled from henceforth to serve him with a single eye and a simple heart, to be faithful to every intimation of his will, and to make him our all in all!

Mr. —— has been here, and I have been with him at —— since his return. We seem glad to be together when we can. When I am with him, I feel quite at home and at ease, and can tell him (so far as I dare tell a creature) all that is in my heart; a plain proof that union of spirit depends no more upon an exact uniformity of sentiment than on a uniformity of prayers; for in some points of doctrine we differ considerably; but I trust I agree with him in the views I have of the excellency, suitableness, and sufficiency of the Saviour, and of his right to reign without a rival in the hearts of his redeemed people. An experimental knowledge of Jesus, as the deliverer from sin and wrath, and the author of eternal life and salvation to all who are enabled to believe, is a sufficient ground for union of heart. In this point all who are taught of God are of one mind. But an eager fighting for or against those points which are usually made the subject of controversy, tends to nourish pride and evil tempers in ourselves, and to alienate our hearts from those we hope to spend an eternity with. In heaven, we shall neither be Dissenters, Moravians, nor Methodists; neither Calvinists nor Arminians; but followers of the Lamb, and children of the kingdom. There we shall hear the voice of war no more.

We are still favoured with health and many temporal blessings. My spiritual walk is not so smooth as my outward path. In public I am mercifully supported; in secret I most sensibly feel my own vileness and weakness; but through all the Lord is gracious.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

January 10, 1775.

THERE is hardly any thing in which the Lord permits me to meet with more disappointment, than in the advantage I am ready to promise myself from creature-converse. When I expect to meet any of my christian friends, my thoughts usually travel much faster than my body; I anticipate the hour of meeting, and my imagination is warmed with the expectation of what I shall say and what I shall hear; and sometimes I have had seasons for which I ought to be more thankful than I am. It is pleasant, indeed, when the Lord favours us with a happy hour, and is pleased to cause

our hearts to burn within us while we are speaking of his goodness. But often it is far otherwise with me: I carry with me a dissipation of spirit, and find that I can neither impart nor receive. Something from within or from without crosses my schemes; and when I retire I seem to have gained nothing but a fresh conviction, that we can neither help nor be helped, unless the Lord himself is pleased to help us. With his presence in our hearts, we might be comfortable and happy though shut up in one of the cells of Newgate: without it, the most select company, the most desirable opportunities, prove but clouds without water.

I have sometimes thought of asking you, whether you find that difference between being abroad and at home that I do? But I take it for granted that you do not: your connections and intimacies are, I believe, chiefly with those who are highly favoured of the Lord, and if you can break through or be upon your guard against the inconveniencies which attend frequent changes and much company, you must be very happy in them. But, I believe, considering my weakness, the Lord has chosen wisely and well for me, in placing me in a state of retirement, and not putting it in my power, were it ever so much my inclination, to be often abroad. As I stir so seldom, I believe, when I do, it is not upon the whole to my disadvantage; for I meet with more or less upon which my reflections afterwards may, by his blessing, be useful to me, though at the time my visits most frequently convince me, how little wisdom or skill I have in improving time and opportunities. But were I to live in London, I know not what might be the consequence. Indeed, I need not puzzle myself about it, as my call does not lie there; but I pity and pray for those who do live there, and I admire such of them as, in those circumstances which appear so formidable to me, are enabled to walk simply, humbly, and closely with the Lord. They remind me of Daniel, unhurt in the midst of lions, or of the bush which Moses saw surrounded with flames, yet not consumed, because the Lord was there. Some such I do know, and I hope you are one of the number.

This is certain, that if the light of God's countenance, and communion with him in love, afford the greatest happiness we are capable of, then whatever tends to indispose us for this pursuit, or to draw a vail between him and our souls, must be our great loss. If we walk with him, it must be in the path of duty, which lies plain before us when our eye is single, and we are waiting with attention upon his word, Spirit, and providence. Now, wherever the path of duty leads we are safe; and it often does lead and place us in such circumstances as no other consideration would make us chuse. We were not designed to be mere recluses, but have all a part to act in life. Now, if I find myself in the midst of things disagreeable enough in themselves to the spiritual life, yet—if, when the question occurs, What dost thou here? my heart can answer, I am here by the will of God,—I believe it to be, all things considered, my duty to be here at this time rather than elsewhere. If, I say, I am tolerably satisfied of this, then I would not burden and grieve myself about what I cannot avoid or alter, but endeavour to take all such things up with cheerfulness, as a part of my daily cross; since I am called, not only to do the will of God, but to suffer for it: but if I am doing my own will rather than his, then I have reason to fear, lest I should meet with either a snare or a sting at every step. May the Lord Jesus be with you.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

April 13, 1776.

DEAR MADAM,

I AM rather of the latest to present my congratulations to you and Mr. —— on your marriage, but I have not been unmindful of you. My heart has repeatedly wished you all that my pen can express, that the new relation in which the providence of God has placed you may be blessed to you in every respect, may afford you much temporal comfort, promote your spiritual progress, and enlarge your sphere of usefulness in the world and in the church.

By this time I suppose visits and ceremonies are pretty well over, and you are beginning to be settled in your new situation. What an important period is a wedding-day! What an entire change of circumstances does it produce! What an influence it has upon every day of future life! How many cares, inquietudes, and trials, does it expose us to, which we might otherwise have avoided! But they who love the Lord, and are guided by his word and providence, have nothing to fear; for in every state, relation, and circumstance in life, he will be with them, and will surely do them good. His grace, which is needful in a single, is sufficient for a married life. I sincerely wish Mr. —— and you much happiness together; that you may be mutually helps meet, and assist each other in walking as fellow-heirs of the hope of eternal life. Your cares and trials, I know, must be increased; may your comforts be increased proportionally! They will be so, if you are enabled heartily and simply to entreat the Lord to keep your heart fixed near to himself. All the temporal blessings and accommodations he provides to sweeten life, and make our passage through this wilderness more a-

greeable, will fail and disappoint us, and produce us more thorns than roses, unless we can keep sight of his hand in bestowing them, and hold and use the gifts in some due subserviency to what we owe to the giver. But alas! we are poor creatures, prone to wander, prone to admire our gourds, cleave to our cisterns, and think of building tabernacles, and taking our rest in this polluted world. Hence the Lord often sees it necessary, in mercy to his children, to embitter their sweets, to break their cisterns, to send a worm to their gourds, and to draw a dark cloud over their most pleasing prospects. His word tells us, that all here is vanity, compared with the light of his countenance; and if we cannot, or will not, believe it upon the authority of his word, we must learn it by experience. May he enable you to settle it in your hearts, that creature-comforts are precarious, insufficient, and ensnaring; that all good comes from his hand, and that nothing can do us good, but so far as he is pleased to make it the instrument of communicating, as a stream, that goodness which is in him as a fountain. Even the bread which we eat, without the influence of his promise and blessing, would no more support us than a stone; but his blessing makes every thing good, gives a tenfold value to our comforts, and greatly diminishes the weight of every cross.

The ring upon your finger is of some value as gold, but this is not much; what makes it chiefly valuable to you is, that you consider it as a pledge and token of the relation you bear to him who gave it you. I know no fitter emblem of the light in which we should consider all those good things which the Lord gives us richly to enjoy. When every thing we receive from him is received and prized as a fruit and a pledge of his covenant-love, then his bounties, instead of being set up as rivals, and idols to draw our hearts from him, awaken us to fresh exercises of gratitude, and furnish us with fresh motives of cheerful obedience every hour.

Time is short, and we live in a dark and cloudy day. When iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold; and we have reason to fear the Lord's hand is lifted up in displeasure at our provocations. May he help us to sit loose to all below, to watch unto prayer for grace to keep our garments clean, and to be faithful witnesses for him in our several places! O, it is my desire for myself and for all my dear friends, that whilst too many seem content with a half profession, a name to live, an outward attachment to ordinances, and sentiments, and parties, we may be ambitious to experience what the glorious gospel is capable of effecting, both as to sanctification and consolation, in this state of infirmity; that we may have our loins girded, and our lamps burning, and by our simplicity and spirituality constrain those who know us to acknowledge that we have been with Jesus, have sat at his feet, and drank of his Spirit.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO MRS. H——,

LETTER I.

LONG and often have I thought of writing to you; now the time is come. May the Lord help me to send a word in season! I know not how it may be with you, but he does, and to him I look to direct my thoughts accordingly. (I suppose you are still in the school of the cross, learning the happy art of extracting real good out of seeming evil, and to grow tall by stooping.) The flesh is a sad untoward dunce in this school; but grace makes the spirit willing to learn by suffering; yea it cares not what it endures, so sin may be mortified, and a conformity to the image of Jesus be increased. Surely when we see the most and the best of the Lord's children so often in heaviness, and when we consider how much he loves them, and what he has done and prepared for them, we may take it for granted that there is a need-be for their sufferings. For it would be easy to his power, and not a thousandth part of what his love intends to do for them, should he make their whole life here, from the hour of their conversion to their death, a continued course of satisfaction and comfort, without any thing to distress them from within or without. But were it so, should we not miss many advantages? In the first place, we should not then be very conformable to our Head, nor be able to say, As he was, so are we in this world. Methinks a believer would be ashamed to be so utterly unlike his Lord. What! the master always a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and the servant always happy and full of comfort! Jesus despised, reproached, neglected, opposed, and betrayed, and his people admired and caressed; he living in the want of all things, and they filled with abundance; he sweating blood for anguish, and they strangers to distress: how unsuitable would these things be! how much better to be called to the honour of filling up the measure of his sufferings! (A cup was put into his hand on our account, and his love engaged him to drink it for us. The wrath which it contained he drank wholly himself, but he left us a little affliction to taste, that we might pledge him, and remember how he loved us, and how much more he endured for us than he will ever call us to endure for him.) Again, how could we, without sufferings, manifest the nature and truth of gospel-grace? What place should we then have for patience, submission, meekness, forbearance, and a readiness to forgive, if we had nothing to try us either from the hand of the Lord, or from the hand of men. (A christian without trials would be like a mill without wind or water; the contrivance and design of the wheel-work within side would be unnoticed and unknown, without something to put it in motion from without.) Nor would our graces grow, unless they were called out to exercise: the difficulties we meet with not only prove but strengthen the graces of the Spirit. If a person was always to sit still, without making use of legs or arms, he would probably wholly lose the power of moving his limbs at last; but by walking and working he becomes strong and active. So, in a long course of ease, the powers of the new man would certainly languish: the soul would grow soft, indolent, cowardly, and faint; and therefore the Lord appoints his children such dispensations as make them strive, and struggle, and pant. They must press through a crowd, swim against a stream, endure hardships, run, wrestle, and fight; and thus their strength grows in the using.

By these things, likewise, they are made more willing to leave the present world, to which we are prone to cleave too closely in our hearts when our path is very smooth. Had Israel enjoyed their former peace and prosperity in Egypt, when Moses came to invite them to

Canaan, I think they would hardly have listened to him. But the Lord suffered them to be brought into great trouble and bondage, and then the news of deliverance was more welcome; yet still they were but half willing, and they carried a love to the flesh-pots of Egypt with them into the wilderness. We are like them: though we say this world is vain and sinful, we are too fond of it; and though we hope for true happiness only in heaven, we are often well content to stay longer here. But the Lord sends afflictions one after another to quicken our desires, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest. Sometimes, if you drive a bird from one branch of a tree, he will hop to another a little higher, and from thence to a third; but if you continue to disturb him, he will at last take wing and fly quite away. Thus we, when forced from one creature-comfort, perch upon another, and so on; but the Lord mercifully follows us with trials, and will not let us rest upon any. By degrees our desires take a nobler flight, and can be satisfied with nothing short of himself; and we say, To depart and be with Jesus is best of all.

I trust you find the name and grace of Jesus more and more precious to you; his promises more sweet, and your hope in them more abiding; your sense of your own weakness and unworthiness daily increasing; and your persuasion of his all-sufficiency to guide, support, and comfort you, more confirmed. You owe your growth in these respects in a great measure to his blessing upon those afflictions which he has prepared for you, and sanctified to you. May you praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that is to come.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

THOUGH I have the pleasure of hearing of you, and sending a remembrance from time to time, I am willing, by this opportunity, to direct a few lines to you, as a more express testimony of my sincere regard.

I think your experience is generally of the fearful, doubting cast. Such souls, however, the Lord has given particular charge to his ministers to comfort. He knows our infirmities, and what temptations mean, and as a good shepherd he expresses a peculiar care and tenderness for the weak of the flock, Isaiah xl. 4. But how must I attempt your comfort? Surely not by strengthening a mistake to which we are all too liable, by leading you to look into your own heart for (what you will never find there) something in yourself whereon to ground your hopes, if not wholly, yet at least in part. Rather let me endeavour to lead you out of yourself; let me invite you to look unto Jesus. Should we look for light in our own eyes, or in the sun? Is it indwelling sin distresses you? Then I can tell you (though you know it) that Jesus died for sin and sinners. I can tell you, that his blood and righteousness are of infinite value; that his arm is almighty, and his compassions infinite; yea, you yourself read his promises every day, and why should you doubt their being fulfilled? If you say you do not question their truth, or that they are accomplished to many, but that you can hardly believe they belong to you; I would ask, what evidence you would require? A voice or an angel from heaven you do not expect. Consider, if many of the promises are not expressly directed to those to whom they belong. When you read your name on the superscription of this letter, you make no scruple to open it: why, then, do you hesitate at embracing the promises of the gospel, where you read that they are addressed to those who mourn, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are poor in spirit, &c. and cannot but be sensible that a gracious God has begun to work these dispositions in your heart? If you say, that though you do at times mourn, hunger, &c. you are afraid you do it not enough, or not aright; consider, that this sort of reasoning is very far from the spirit and language of the gospel; for it is grounded on a secret supposition, that in the forgiveness of sin God has a respect to something more than the atonement and mediation of Jesus; namely, to some previous good qualifications in a sinner's heart, which are to share with the blood of Christ in the honour of salvation. The enemy deceives us in this matter the more easily, because a propensity to the covenant of works is a part of our natural depravity. Depend upon it, you will never have a suitable and sufficient sense of the evil of sin, and of your share in it, so long as you have any sin remaining in you. We must see Jesus as he is, before our apprehensions of any spiritual truth will be complete. But if we know that we must perish without Christ, and that he is able to save to the uttermost, we know enough to warrant us to cast our souls upon him, and we dishonour him by fearing that when we do so he will disappoint our hope. But if you are still perplexed about the high points of election, &c. I would advise you to leave the disposal of others to the great Judge; and as to yourself, I think I need not say much to persuade you, that if ever you are saved at all, it must be in a way of free and absolute grace. Leave disputes to others; wait upon the Lord, and he will teach you all things, in such degree and time as he sees best. Perhaps you have suffered for taking things too much upon trust from men. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. One is your master, even Christ. Study and pray over the Bible; and you may take it as a sure rule, that whatever

sentiment makes any part of the word of God unwelcome to you, is justly to be suspected. Aim at a cheerful spirit. The more you trust God, the better you will serve him. While you indulge unbelief and suspicion, you weaken your own hands, and discourage others. Be thankful for what he has shewn you, and wait upon him for more; you shall find he has not said, "Seek ye my face in vain." I heartily commend you to his grace and care, and am, &c.

LETTER III.

At length, and without farther apology for my silence, I sit down to ask you, how you fare? Afflictions I hear have been your lot; and if I had not heard so, I should have taken it for granted, for I believe the Lord loves you, and as many as he loves he chastens. I think you can say afflictions have been good for you, and I doubt not but you have found strength according to your day; so that though you may have been sharply tried, you have not been overpowered. For the Lord has engaged his faithfulness for this to all his children, that he will support them in all their trials, so that the fire shall not consume them nor the floods drown them, 1 Cor. x. 13, Isa xliii. 2.

If you can say thus much, cannot you go a little further, and add, in the apostle's words, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear. I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; yea, doubtless, I count all things loss and of no regard, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Methinks I hear you say, "God, who comforteth those who are cast down, has comforted my soul; and as my troubles have abounded, my consolations in Christ have abounded also. He has delivered, he does deliver, and in him I trust that he will yet deliver me." Surely you can set your seal to these words. The Lord help you, then, to live more and more a life of faith, to feed upon the promises, and to rejoice in the assurance that all things are yours, and shall surely work for your good.

If I guess right at what passes in your heart, the name of Jesus is precious to you; and this is a sure token of salvation, and that of God. You could not have loved him if he had not loved you first. He spoke to you, and said, "Seek my face," before your heart cried to him "Thy face, O Lord, will I seek." But you complain, "Alas! I love him so little." That very complaint proves that you love him a great deal, for if you loved him but a little, you would think you loved him enough. A mother loves her child a great deal, yet does not complain for not loving it more, nay, perhaps, she hardly thinks it possible. But such an infinite object is Jesus, that they who love him better than parents or child, or any earthly relation or comfort, will still think they hardly love him at all, because they see such a vast disproportion between the utmost they can give him and what in himself he deserves from them. But I can give you good advice and good news: love him as well as you can now, and ere long you shall love him better. O, when you see him as he is, then I am sure you will love him indeed! If you want to love him better now while you are here, I believe I can tell you the secret how this is to be attained: trust him. The more you trust him the better you will love him. If you ask farther, How shall I do to trust him? I answer, Try him. The more you make trial of him, the more your trust in him will be strengthened. Venture upon his promises; carry them to him, and see if he will not be as good as his word. But, alas! Satan and unbelief work the contrary way. We are unwilling to try him, and therefore unable to trust him; and what wonder, then, that our love is faint, for who can love at uncertainties?

If you are in some measure thankful for what you have received, and hungering and thirsting for more, you are in the frame I would wish for myself, and I desire to praise the Lord on your behalf. Pray for us. We join in love to you.

I am, &c.

Jan 20. 1781

LETTERS

TO MISS P———.

LETTER I.

August 17, 1776.

It is indeed natural to us to wish and to plan, and it is merciful in the Lord to disappoint our plans, and to cross our wishes. For we cannot be safe, much less happy, but in proportion as we are weaned from our own wills, and made simply desirous of being directed by his guidance. This truth, when we are enlightened by his word, is sufficiently familiar to the judgment, but we seldom learn to reduce it into practice, without being trained a while in the school of disappointment. The schemes we form look so plausible and convenient, that when they are broken we are ready to say, What a pity! We try again, and with no better success; we are grieved, and perhaps angry, and plan out another, and so on: at length, in a course of time, experience and observation begin to convince us that we are not more able than we are worthy to chuse aright for ourselves. Then the Lord's invitation to cast our cares upon him, and his promise to take care of us, appear valuable; and when we have done planning, his plan in our favour gradually opens, and he does more and better for us than we could either ask or think. I can hardly recollect a single plan of mine of which I have not since seen reason to be satisfied, that had it taken place in season and circumstance just as I proposed, it would, humanly speaking, have proved my ruin, or at least it would have deprived me of the greater good the Lord had designed for me. (We judge of things by their present appearances, but the Lord sees them in their consequences.) If we could do so likewise, we should be perfectly of his mind, but as we cannot, it is an unspeakable mercy that he will manage for us, whether we are pleased with his management or not; and it is spoken of as one of his heaviest judgments, when he gives any person or people up to the way of their own hearts, and to walk after their own counsels.

Indeed, we may admire his patience towards us. If we were blind, and reduced to desire a person to lead us, and should yet pretend to dispute with him, and direct him at every step, we should probably soon weary him, and provoke him to leave us to find the way by ourselves if we could. But our gracious Lord is long-suffering and full of compassion: he bears with our frowardness, yet he will take methods both to shame and to humble us, and to bring us to a confession that he is wiser than we. The great and unexpected benefit he intends us, by all the discipline we meet with, is to tread down our wills, and bring them into subjection to his. So far as we attain to this, we are out of the reach of disappointment, for when the will of God can please us, we shall be pleased every day, and from morning to night, I mean with respect to his dispensations. O the happiness of such a life! I have an idea of it: I hope I am aiming at it, but surely I have not attained it. Self is active in my heart, if it does not absolutely reign there. I profess to believe that one thing is needful and sufficient, and yet my thoughts are prone to wander after a hundred more. If it be true that the light of his countenance is better than life, why am I solicitous about any thing else? If he be all sufficient, and gives me liberty to call him mine, why do I go a-begging to creatures for help? If he be about my path and bed; if the smallest, as well as the greatest events in which I am concerned are under his immediate direction; if the very hairs of my head are numbered; then my care (any farther than a care to walk in the paths of his precepts, and to follow the openings of his providence) must be useless and needless, yea indeed sinful and heathen.

ish, burdensome to myself and dishonourable to my profession. Let us cast down the load we are unable to carry, and if the Lord be our shepherd, refer all and trust all to him. Let us endeavour to live to him and for him to-day, and be glad that to-morrow, with all that is behind it, is in his hands.

It is storied of Pompey, that when his friends would have dissuaded him from putting to sea in a storm, he answered, It is necessary for me to sail, but it is not necessary for me to live. O pompous speech, in Pompey's sense! He was full of the idea of his own importance, and would rather have died than have taken a step beneath his supposed dignity. But it may be accommodated with propriety to a believer's case. It becomes us to say, it is not necessary for me to be rich, or what the world accounts wise; to be healthy, or admired by my fellow-worms; to pass through life in a state of prosperity and outward comfort;—these things may be, or they may be otherwise, as the Lord in his wisdom shall appoint, but it is necessary for me to be humble and spiritual, to seek communion with God, to adorn my profession of the gospel, and to yield submissively to his disposal, in whatever way, whether of service or suffering, he shall be pleased to call me to glorify him in the world: it is not necessary for me to live long, but highly expedient that whilst I do live I should live to him. Here, then, I would bound my desires, and here, having his word both for my rule and my warrant, I am secured from asking amiss. Let me have his presence and his Spirit, wisdom to know my calling, and opportunities and faithfulness to improve them; and as to the rest, Lord, help me to say, What thou wilt, when thou wilt, and how thou wilt.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

DEAR MADAM,

WHAT a poor, uncertain, dying world is this! What a wilderness in itself! How dark, how desolate, without the light of the gospel and the knowledge of Jesus! It does not appear so to us in a state of nature, because we are then in a state of enchantment, the magical lantern blinding us with a splendid delusion.

Thus in the desert's dreary waste,
By magic power produced in haste,
As old romances say,
Castles and groves, and music sweet,
The senses of the trav'ller cheat,
And stop him in his way.

But while he gazes with surprise,
The charm dissolves, the vision dies,
'Twas but enchanted ground:
Thus, if the Lord our spirit touch,
The world, which promised us so much,
A wilderness is found.

It is a great mercy to be undeceived in time; and though our gay dreams are at an end, and we awake to every thing that is disgustful and dismaying, yet we see a highway through the wilderness, a powerful guard, an infallible guide at hand to conduct us through; and we can discern, beyond the limits of the wilderness, a better land, where we shall be at rest and at home. What will the difficulties we meet by the way then signify? The remembrance of them will only remain to heighten our sense of the love, care, and power of our Saviour and leader. O how shall we then admire, adore, and praise him, when he shall condescend to unfold to us the beauty, propriety, and harmony of the whole train of his dispensations towards us, and give us a clear retrospect of all the way, and all the turns of our pilgrimage!

In the mean while, the best method of adorning our profession, and of enjoying peace in our souls, is simply to trust him, and absolutely to commit ourselves and our all to his management. By casting our burdens upon him, our spirits become light and cheerful; we are freed from a thousand anxieties and inquietudes, which are wearisome to our minds, and which, with respect to events, are needless for us, yea, useless. But though it may be easy to speak of this trust, and it appears to our judgment perfectly right and reasonable, the actual attainment is a great thing; and especially so to trust the Lord, not by fits and starts, surrendering one day, and retracting the next, but to abide by our surrender, and go habitually trusting through all the changes we meet, knowing that his love, purpose, and promise, are unchangeable. Some little faintings perhaps none are freed from; but I believe a power of trusting the Lord in good measure at all times, and living quietly under the shadow of his wing, is what the promise warrants us to expect, if we seek it by diligent prayer; if not all at once, yet by a gradual increase. May it be your experience and mine.

I am, &c.

LETTERS

TO

THE REVEREND Mr. B——.

LETTER I.

January 27, 1778.

DEAR AND REVEREND SIR,

I CALL you *Dear* because I love you, and I shall continue to stile you *Reverend* as long as you dignify me with that title. It is, indeed, a pretty sounding epithet, and forms a striking contrast in the usual application. The inhabitants of the moon (if there be any) have perhaps no idea how many Reverend, Right Reverend, and Most Reverend, sinners we have in Europe. And yet you are *reverend*, and I revere you, because I believe the Lord liveth in you, and has chosen you to be a temple of his presence, and an instrument of his grace.

I hope the two sermons you preached in London were made useful to others, and the medicines you took there were useful to yourself. I am glad to hear you are safe at home, and something better. Cheerful spring is approaching: then I hope the barometer of your spirits will rise. But the presence of the Lord can bring a pleasanter spring than April, and even in the depth of winter.

At present it is January with me, both within and without. The outward sun shines and looks pleasant, but his beams are faint, and too feeble to dissolve the frost. So is it in my heart; I have many bright and pleasant beams of truth in my view, but cold predominates in my frost-bound spirit, and they have but little power to warm me. I could tell a stranger something about Jesus that would perhaps astonish him: such a glorious person! such wonderful love! such humiliation! such a death! and then what he is now himself, and what he is to his people! What a sun! what a shield! what a root! what a life! what a friend! My tongue can run on upon these subjects sometimes; and could my heart keep pace with it I should be the happiest fellow in the country. Stupid creature! to know these things so well, and yet be no more affected with them! Indeed, I have reason to be upon ill terms with myself! It is strange that pride should ever find any thing in my experience to feed upon; but this completes my character for folly, vileness, and inconsistence, that I am not only poor, but proud; and though I am convinced I am a very wretch, a nothing before the Lord, I am prone to go forth among my fellow-creatures as though I were wise and good.

You wonder what I am doing; and well you may: I am sure you would, if you lived with me. Too much of my time passes in busy idleness, too much in waking dreams. I aim at something; but hindrances from within and without make it difficult for me to accomplish any thing. I dare not say I am absolutely idle, or that I wilfully waste much of my time. I have seldom one hour free from interruption. Letters come that must be answered, visitants that must be received, business that must be attended to. I have a good many sheep and lambs to look after, sick and afflicted souls, dear to the Lord; and therefore, whatever stands still, these must not be neglected. Amongst these various avocations, night comes before I am ready for noon; and the week closes, when, according to the state of my business, it should not be more than Tuesday. O precious, irrecoverable time! O that I had more wisdom in redeeming and improving thee! Pray for me, that the Lord may teach me to serve him better.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

April 28, 1778.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS not much disappointed at not meeting you at home; I know how difficult it is to get away from ———, if you are seen in the street after breakfast. The horse-leech has two daughters, saying, Give, give: the cry there is, Preach, preach. When you have told them all, you must tell them more, or tell it them over again. Whoever will find tongue, they will engage to find ears. Yet I do not blame this importunity, I wish you were teased more with it in your own town; for though, undoubtedly, there are too many, both at N——— and here, whose religion lies too much in hearing, yet in many it proceeds from a love to the truth, and to the ministers who dispense it. And I generally observe, that they who are not willing to hear a stranger (if his character is known), are indifferent enough about hearing their own minister.

I beg you to pray for me. I am a poor creature, full of wants. I seem to need the wisdom of Solomon, the meekness of Moses, and the zeal of Paul, to enable me to make full proof of my ministry. But, alas! you may guess the rest.

Send me "The way to Christ." I am willing to be a debtor to the wise and unwise, to doctors and shoemakers, if I can get a hint, or a *Nota Bene*, from any one, without respect to parties. When a house is on fire, Churchmen, Dissenters, Methodists, Papists, Moravians, and Mystics, are all welcome to bring water. At such times, nobody asks, Pray, friend, whom do you hear? or, What do you think of the five points? &c. &c.

I am, &c.

LETTER. III.

July 7, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I KNOW not that I have any thing to say worth postage, though perhaps, had I seen you before you set off, something might have occurred which will not be found in my letter. Yet I write a line, because you bid me, and are now in a far, foreign country. You will find Mr. —— a man to your tooth, but he is in Mr. W——'s connection. So I remember venerable Bede, after giving a high character of some contemporary, kicks his full pail of milk down, and reduces him almost to nothing, by adding, in the close, to this purpose: "but, unhappy man, he did not keep Easter our way." A fig for all connections, say I, and say you, but that which is formed by the bands, joints, and ligaments, the apostle speaks of, Eph. iv. 16, *et alibi*. Therefore, I venture to repeat it, that Mr. ——, though he often sees and hears Mr. W——, and I believe loves him well, is a good man; and you will see the invisible mark upon his forehead, if you examine him with your spiritual spectacles.

Now, methinks I do pity you: I see you melted with heat, stiffled with smoke, and stunned with noise. Ah! what a change from the brooks, and bushes, and birds, and green fields, to which you had lately access! Of old they used to retire into the deserts for mortification. If I was to set myself a moderate penance, it might be to spend a fortnight in London in the height of summer. But I forget myself:—I hope the Lord is with you, and then all places are alike. He makes the dungeon and the stocks comfortable (Acts xvi.); yea, a fiery furnace, or a lion's den. A child of God in London seems to be in all these trying situations: but Jesus can preserve his own. I honour the grace of God in those few (comparatively few, I fear) who preserve their garments undefiled in that Sardis. The air is filled with infection, and it is by special power and miraculous preservation they enjoy spiritual health, when so many sicken and fall around them on the right hand and on the left. May the Lord preserve you from the various epidemical soul-diseases which abound where you are, and be your comfort and defence from day to day.

Last week we had a lion in town. I went to see him. He was wonderfully tame; as familiar with his keeper, as docile and obedient, as a spaniel. Yet the man told me he had his surly fits, when they durst not touch him. No looking-glass could express my face more justly than this lion did my heart. I could trace every feature: as wild and fierce by nature, yea, much more so; but grace has in some measure tamed me. I know and love my Keeper, and sometimes watch his looks that I may learn his will. But, oh! I have my surly fits too; seasons when I relapse into the savage again, as though I had forgotten all.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

July 18, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As we are so soon to meet, and as I have no thing very important to communicate, and many things occur which might demand my time, I have no other plea to offer, either to you or myself, for writing again, but because I love you.

I pity the unknown considerable minister, with whom you smoked your morning-pipe. But we must take men and things as we find them: and when we fall in company with

those from whom we can get little other good, it is likely we shall at least find occasion for the exercise of patience and charity towards them, and of thankfulness to Him who hath made us to differ. And these are good things, though, perhaps, the occasion may not be pleasant. Indeed, a christian, if in a right spirit, is always in his Lord's school, and may learn either a new lesson, or how to practise an old one, by every thing he sees or hears, provided he does not wilfully tread upon forbidden ground. If he were constrained to spend a day with the poor creatures in the common side of Newgate, though he could not talk with them of what God has done for his soul, he might be more sensible of his mercy by the contrast he would observe around him. He might rejoice for himself, and mourn over them, and thus perhaps get as much benefit as from the best sermon he ever heard.

It is necessary, all things taken together, to have connection more or less with narrow-minded people. If they are, notwithstanding their prejudices, civil to us, they have a right to some civility from us. We may love them, though we cannot admire them, and pick something good from them, notwithstanding we see much to blame. It is, perhaps, the highest triumph we can obtain over bigotry, when we are able to bear with bigots themselves. For they are a set of troublesome folks, whom Mr. Self is often very forward to exclude from the comprehensive candour and tenderness which he professes to exercise towards those who differ from him.

I am glad your present home (a believer should be always at home) is pleasant; the rooms large and airy; your host and hostess kind and spiritual; and, upon the whole, all things as well as you could expect to find them, considering where you are. I could give you much such an account of my usual head-quarters in the city; but still London is London. I do not wish you to live there, for my own sake as well as yours; but if the Lord should so appoint, I believe he can make you easy there, and enable me to make a tolerable shift without you. Yet I certainly should miss you; for I have no person in this neighbourhood with whom my heart so thoroughly unites in spirituals, though there are many whom I love. But conversation with most christians is something like going to court; where, except you are dressed exactly according to a prescribed standard, you will either not be admitted, or must expect to be heartily stared at. But you and I can meet and converse, *sans contrainte*, in an undress, without fear of offending, or being accounted offenders for a word out of place, and not exactly in the pink of the mode.

I know not how it is: I think my sentiments and experience are as orthodox and Calvinistical as need be; and yet I am a sort of speckled bird among my Calvinist brethren. I am a mighty good Churchman, but pass amongst such as a Dissenter in prunello. On the other hand, the Dissenters (many of them I mean) think me defective, either in understanding or in conscience, for staying where I am. Well, there is a middle party, called Methodists, but neither do my dimensions exactly fit with them. I am somehow disqualified for claiming a full brotherhood with any party. But there are a few among all parties who bear with me and love me, and with this I must be content at present. But so far as they love the Lord Jesus, I desire, and by his grace I determine (with or without their leave) to love them all. Party walls, though stronger than the walls of Babylon, must come down in the general ruin, when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up, if not sooner.

I am, &c.

LETTER V

July —, 177o.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WAS glad to hear that you were again within a few miles of me; and I would praise the Lord, who led you out, and brought you home in safety, and preserved all in peace while you were abroad, so that you found nothing very painful to embitter your return. Many go abroad well, but return no more. The affectionate wife, the prattling children, listen for the well-known sound of papa's foot at the door; but they listen in vain: a fall or a fever has intercepted him, and he is gone far, far away. Some leave all well when they go from home; but how changed, how trying the scene when they come back! In their absence, the Lord has taken away the desire of their eyes with a stroke, or perhaps ruffians have plundered and murdered their family in the dead of the night, or the fire devoured their habitation.

Ah! how large and various is the list of evils and calamities with which sin has filled the world! You and I and ours escape them: we stand, though in a field of battle, where thousands fall around us, because the Lord is pleased to keep us. May he have the praise, and may we only live to love and serve him.

Mrs. —— has been very ill, and my heart often much pained while you have been absent. But the Lord has removed his hand; she is much better, and I hope she will be seen in his house to-morrow. I have few trials in my own person; but when the Lord afflicts her, I feel it. It is a mercy that he has made us one; but it exposes us to many a pain, which we might have missed, if we cared but little for each other

Alas! there is usually an ounce of the golden calf, of idolatry and dependence, in all the warm regard we bear to creatures. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* For this reason, our sharpest trials usually spring from our most valued comforts.

I cannot come to you: therefore you must come hither speedily. Be sure to bring Mr. B—— with you. I shall be very glad to see him, and I long to thank him for clothing my book. It looks well on the outside, and I hope to find it sound and savoury. I love the author, and that is a step towards liking the book. For where we love, we are generally tender, and favourably take every thing by the best handle, and are vastly full of candour: but if we are prejudiced against the man, the poor book is half condemned before we open it. It had need be written well, for it will be read with a suspicious eye, as if we wished to find treason in every page. I am glad I diverted and profited you by calling you a speckled bird. I can tell you, such a bird in this day, that wears the full colour of no sect or party, is *rara avis*; if not quite so scarce as the phœnix, yet to be met with but here and there. It is impossible I should be all of a colour, when I have been a debtor to all sorts; and, like the jay in the fable, have been beholden to most of the birds in the air for a feather or two. Church and Meeting, Methodist and Moravian, may all perceive something in my coat taken from them. None of them are angry with me for borrowing from them; but then, why could not I be content with their colour, without going amongst other flocks and coveys, to make myself such a motley figure? Let them be angry; if I have culled the best feathers from all, then surely I am finer than any.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

August —, 1778.

DEAR SIR,

If the Lord affords health, if the weather be tolerable, if no unforeseen change takes place, if no company comes in upon me to-night (which sometimes unexpectedly happens),—with these provisos, Mr. S—— and I have engaged to travel to ——— on Monday next, and hope to be with you by or before eleven o'clock.

In such a precarious world, it is needful to form our plans at two days distance, with precaution and exceptions, James iv. 13. However, if it be the Lord's will to bring us together, and if the purposed interview be for his glory and our good, then I am sure nothing shall prevent it. And who in his right mind would wish either to visit or be visited upon any other terms? O! if we could but be pleased with his will, we might be pleased from morning to night, and every day in the year.

Pray for a blessing upon our coming together. It would be a pity to walk ten miles to pick straws, or to come with our empty vessels upon our heads, saying, we have found no water.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

October —, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letters are always welcome; the last doubly so, for being unexpected. If you never heard before of a line of yours being useful, I will tell you for once, that I get some pleasure and instruction whenever you write to me. And I see not but your call to letter-writing is as clear as mine, at least when you are able to put pen to paper.

I must say something to your queries about 2 Sam. xiv. I do not approve of the scholastic distinctions about inspiration, which seem to have a tendency to explain away the authority and certainty of one half of the Bible at least. Though the penmen of the scriptures were ever so well informed of some facts, they would, as you observe, need express, full, and infallible inspiration, to teach them what the Lord would have selected and recorded for the use of the church, amongst many others which to themselves might appear equally important.

However, with respect to historical passages, I dare not pronounce positively that any of them are, even in the literal sense, unworthy of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and the dignity of inspiration. Some, yea many of them, have often appeared trivial to me; but I check the thought, and charge it to my own ignorance and temerity. It must have some importance, because I read it in God's book. On the other hand, though I will not deny that they all may have a spiritual and mystical sense (for I am no more qualified to judge of the deep things of the Spirit, than to tell you what is passing this morning at the bottom of the sea); yet if, with my present modicum of light, I should undertake to expound many passages in a mystical sense, I fear such a judge as you would think my interpretations fanciful, and not well supported. I suppose I should have thought the Bible complete, though it had not informed me of the death of Rebekah's nurse, or where she was buried. But some tell me that Deborah is the law, and that by the oak I am to understand the cross of Christ: and I remember to have heard of a preacher who discovered a type of Christ crucified in Absalom hanging by the hair on another oak. I am quite

a mole when compared with these eagle-eyed divines, and must often content myself with plodding upon the lower ground of accommodation and allusion, except when the New-Testament writers assure me what the mind of the Holy Ghost was. I can find the gospel with more confidence in the history of Sarah and Hagar, than in that of Leah and Rachel; though, without Paul's help, I should have considered them both as family-squabbles, recorded chiefly to illustrate the general truth, that vanity and vexation of spirit are incident to the best men, in the most favoured situations. And I think there is no part of Old-Testament history from which I could not (the Lord helping me) draw observations that might be suitable to the pulpit, and profitable to his people: so I might, perhaps, from Livy or Tacitus. But then, with the Bible in my hands, I go upon sure grounds: I am certain of the facts I speak from, that they really did happen. I may likewise depend upon the springs and motives of actions, and not amuse myself and my hearers with speeches which were never spoken, and motives which were never thought of, till the historian rummaged his pericranium for something to embellish his work. I doubt not but, were you to consider Joab's courtly conduct only in a literal sense, how it tallied with David's desire, and how gravely and graciously he granted himself a favour while he professed to oblige Joab: I say, in this view you would be able to illustrate many important scriptural doctrines, and to shew that the passage is important to those who are engaged in studying the anatomy of the human heart.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

October 27, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE been witness to a great and important revolution this morning, which took place while the greatest part of the world was asleep. Like many state revolutions, its first beginnings were almost undiscernable; but the progress, though gradual, was steady, and the event decisive. A while ago darkness reigned. Had a man then dropped, for the first time, into our world, he might have thought himself banished into a hopeless dungeon. How could he expect light to rise out of such a state? And when he saw the first glimmering of dawn in the east, how could he promise himself that it was the forerunner of such a glorious sun as has since arisen. With what wonder would such a new comer observe the bounds of his view enlarging, and the distinctness of objects increasing from one minute to another; and how well content would he be to part with the twinklings of the stars, when he had the broad day all around him in exchange! I cannot say this revolution is extraordinary, because it happens every morning; but surely it is astonishing, or rather it would be so, if man was not astonishingly stupid.

Such strangers once were we. Darkness, gross darkness, covered us. How confined were our views! And even the things which were within our reach we could not distinguish. Little did we then think what a glorious day we were appointed to see; what an unbounded prospect would ere long open before us. We knew not that there was a Sun of righteousness, and that he would dawn, and rise, and shine upon our hearts. And as the idea of what we see now was then hidden from us, so at present we are almost equally at a loss how to form any conception of the stronger light and brighter prospects which we wait and hope for. Comparatively we are in the dark still: at the most, we have but a dim twilight, and see nothing clearly; but it is the dawn of immortality, and a sure presage and earnest of glory.

Thus, at times, it seems, a darkness that may be felt broods over your natural spirits: but when the day-star rises upon your heart, you see and rejoice in his light. You have days as well as nights; and after a few more vicissitudes, you will take your flight to the regions of everlasting light, where your sun will go down no more. Happy you, and happy I, if I shall meet you there, as I trust I shall. How shall we love, and sing, and wonder, and praise the Saviour's name.

Last Sunday a young man died here of extreme old age, at twenty-five. He laboured hard to ruin a good constitution, and unhappily succeeded; yet amused himself with the hopes of recovery almost to the last. We have a sad knot of such poor creatures in this place, who labour to stifle each other's convictions, and to ruin themselves and associates, soul and body. How industriously is Satan served! I was formerly one of his most active under-tempters. Not content with running the broad way myself, I was indefatigable in enticing others; and had my influence been equal to my wishes, I would have carried all the human race with me. And, doubtless, some have perished, to whose destruction I was greatly instrumental, by tempting them to sin, and by poisoning and hardening them with principles of infidelity; and yet I was spared. When I think of the most with whom I spent my unhappy days of ignorance, I am ready to say, I only am escaped alive to tell thee. Surely I have not half the activity and zeal in the service of him who snatched me as a brand out of the burning, as I had in the service of his enemy. Then the whole stream of my endeavours and affections went one way; now my best desires are continually crossed, counteracted, and spoiled, by the sin which

dwelleth in me; then the tide of a corrupt nature bore me along, now I have to strive and swim against it. The Lord cut me short of opportunities, and placed me where I could do but little mischief; but had my abilities and occasions been equal to my heart, I should have been a Voltaire and a Tiberius in one character, a monster of profaneness and licentiousness. "O to grace how great a debtor!" A common drunkard or profligate is a petty sinner to what I was. I had the ambition of a Cæsar or an Alexander, and wanted to rank in wickedness among the foremost of the human race. When you have read this, praise the Lord for his mercy to the chief of sinners, and pray that I may have grace to be faithful.—But I have rambled. I meant to tell you, that on Sunday afternoon I preached from Ezekiel xxxiii. 10, 11, "Why will ye die?" &c. I endeavoured to shew poor sinners, that if they died, it was because they would, and if they would they must. I was much affected for a time: I could hardly speak for weeping, and some wept with me. (From some, alas! I can no more draw a tear, or a relenting thought, than from a mill-stone.)

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

November 27, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU are a better expositor of scripture than of my speeches, if you really inferred from my last that I think you shall die soon. I cannot say positively you will not die soon, because life at all times is uncertain; however, according to the doctrine of probabilities, I think, and always thought, you bid fair enough to outlive me. The gloomy tinge of your weak spirits led you to consider yourself much worse in point of health than you appear to me to be.

In the other point I dare be more positive, that die when you will, you will die in the Lord. Of this I have not the least doubt; and I believe you doubt of it less, if possible, than I, except in those darker moments when the atrabilious humour prevails.

I heartily sympathize with you in your complaints; but I see you in safe hands. The Lord loves you, and will take care of you. He who raises the dead, can revive your spirits when you are cast down. He who sets bounds to the sea, and says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further," can limit and moderate that gloom which sometimes distresses you. He knows why he permits you to be thus exercised. I cannot assign the reasons, but I am sure they are worthy of his wisdom and love, and that you will hereafter see, and say, He has done all things well. If I was as wise as your philosopher, I might say a great deal about a melancholy complexion; but I love not to puzzle myself with second causes, while the first cause is at hand, which sufficiently accounts for every phenomenon in a believer's experience. Your constitution, your situation, your temper, your distemper, all that is either comfortable or painful in your lot, is of his appointment. The hairs of your head are all numbered: the same power which produced the planet Jupiter is necessary to the production of a single hair, nor can one of them fall to the ground without his notice, any more than the stars can fall from their orbits. In providence, no less than in creation, he is *Maximus in minimis*. Therefore fear not; only believe. (Our sea may sometimes be stormy, but we have an infallible pilot, and shall infallibly gain our port.)

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

February 23. 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ON Saturday, and not before, I heard you had been ill. Had the news reached me sooner, I should have sent you a line sooner. I hope you will be able to inform me that you are now better, and that the Lord continues to do you good by every dispensation he allots you. Healing and wounding are equally from his hand, and equally tokens of his love and care over us. I have but little affliction in my own person, but I have been often chastened of late by proxy. The Lord, for his people's sake, is still pleased to give me health and strength for public service, but when I need the rod he lays it upon Mrs. ———. In this way I have felt much, without being disabled or laid aside. But he has heard prayer for her likewise, and for more than a fortnight past she has been comfortably well. I lay at least one half of her sicknesses to my own account: she suffers for me, and I through her. It is indeed touching me in a tender part. Perhaps if I could be more wise, watchful, and humble, it might contribute more to the re-establishment of her health than all the medicines she takes.

I somehow neglected to confer with you about the business of the Fast-day. The last of my three sermons, when I had, as I expected, the largest congregation, was a sort of historical discourse, from Deut. xxxii. 15, in which, running over the leading national events from the time of Wickliff, I endeavoured to trace the steps and turns by which the Lord has made us a fat and thriving people, and in the event blessed us beyond his favourite Jeshurun of old, with civil and religious liberty, peace, honour, and prosperity, and gospel-privileges: How fat we

were when the war terminated in the year 1763, and how we have kicked, and forsaken the Rock of our salvation of late years. Then followed a sketch of our present state and spirit as a people, both in a religious and political view. I started at the picture while I drew it, though it was a very inadequate representation. We seemed willing to afflict our souls, for one day, as Dr. Lowth reads Isa. lviii. 5. But the next day, things returned into their former channel: the fast and the occasion seemed presently forgotten, except by a few simple souls, who are despised and hated by the rest for their preciseness, because they think sin ought to be lamented every day in the year.

Who would envy Cassandra her gift of prophecy upon the terms she had it, that her declarations, however true, should meet with no belief or regard? It is the lot of gospel-ministers, with respect to the bulk of their hearers. But blessed be the grace which makes a few exceptions. Here and there one will hear, believe, and be saved. Every one of these is worth a world, and our success with a few should console us for all our trials.

Come and see us as soon as you can, only not to-morrow, for I am then to go to T——. My Lord, the great Shepherd has one sheep there, related to the fold under my care. I can seldom see her, and she is very ill. I expect she will be soon removed to the pasture above. Our love to Mrs. B——.

Believe me yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

April 23, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

MAY I not style myself a friend, when I remember you after an interval of several weeks since I saw you, and through a distance of threescore miles? But the truth is, you have been neither absent nor distant from my heart a day. Your idea has travelled with me: you are a kind of familiar, very often before the eye of my mind. This, I hope, may be admitted as a proof of friendship.

I know the Lord loves you, and you know it likewise: every affliction affords you a fresh proof of it. How wise his management in our trials! How wisely adjusted in season, weight, and continuance, to answer his gracious purposes in sending them! How unspeakably better to be at his disposal than at our own! So you say, so you think, so you find. You trust in him, and shall not be disappointed. Help me with your prayers, that I may trust him too, and be at length enabled to say without reserve, What thou wilt, when thou wilt, how thou wilt. I had rather speak these three sentences from my heart, in my mother-tongue, than be master of all the languages in Europe.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER XII.

August 19, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

AMONG the rest of temporal mercies, I would be thankful for pen, ink, and paper, and the convenience of the post, by which means we can waft a thought to a friend when we cannot get at him. My will has been good to see you, but you must accept the will for the deed. The Lord has not permitted me.

I have been troubled of late with the rheumatism in my left arm. Mine is a sinful, vile body, and it is a mercy that any part of it is free from pain. It is virtually the seat and subject of all diseases; but the Lord holds them like wild beasts in a chain, under a strong restraint: were that restraint taken off, they would rush upon their prey from every quarter, and seize upon every limb, member, joint, and nerve, at once. Yet, though I am a sinner, and though my whole texture is so frail and exposed, I have enjoyed for a number of years an almost perfect exemption both from pain and sickness. This is wonderful indeed, even in my own eyes.

But my soul is far from being in a healthy state. There I have laboured, and still labour, under a complication of diseases; and, but for the care and skill of an infallible Physician, I must have died the death long ago. At this very moment my soul is feverish, dropsical, paralytic. I feel a loss of appetite, a disinclination both to food and to medicine; so that I am alive by miracle: yet I trust I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. When I faint, he revives me again. I am sure he is able, and I trust he has promised to heal me; but how inveterate must my disease be, that is not yet subdued, even under his management!

Well, my friend, there is a land where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick Then my eyes will not be dim, nor my ear heavy, nor my heart hard.

> One sight of Jesus as he is
> Will strike all sin for ever dead.

Blessed be his name for this glorious hope! May it cheer us under all our present uneasy feelings, and reconcile us to every cross. The way must be right, however rough, that leads to such a glorious end.

O for more of that gracious influence, which in a moment can make the wilderness-soul rejoice and blossom like the rose! I want something which neither critics nor commentators can help me to. The scripture it

self, whether I read it in Hebrew, Greek, French, or English, is a sealed book in all these languages, unless the Spirit of the Lord is present to expound and apply. Pray for me. No prayer seems more suitable to me than that of the psalmist: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name."

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

August 28, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WANT to hear how you are. I hope your complaint is not worse than when I saw you. I hope you are easier, and will soon find yourself able to move about again. I should be sorry, if to the symptoms of the stone you should have the gout superadded in your right hand, for then you would not be able to write to me.

We go on much as usual, sometimes very poorly, sometimes a little better: the latter is the case to-day. My rheumatism continues, but it is very moderate and tolerable. The Lord deals gently with us, and gives us many proofs that he does not afflict willingly.

The days speed away apace: each one bears away its own burden with it, to return no more. Both pleasures and pains that are past are gone for ever. What is yet future will likewise be soon past. The end is coming. O, to realize the thought, and to judge of things now in some measure suitable to the judgment we shall form of them when we are about to leave them all! Many things which now either elate or depress us, will then appear to be trifles light as air.

One thing is needful: to have our hearts united to the Lord in humble faith; to set him always before us; to rejoice in him as our shepherd and our portion; to submit to all his appointments, not of necessity, because he is stronger than we, but with a cheerful acquiescence, because he is wise and good, and loves us better than we do ourselves; to feed upon his truth; to have our understandings, wills, affections, imaginations, and memory, all filled and impressed with the great mysteries of redeeming love; to do all for him, to receive all from him, to find all in him. I have mentioned many things, but they are all comprised in one, a life of faith in the Son of God. We are empty vessels in ourselves, but we cannot remain empty. Except Jesus dwells in our hearts and fills them with his power and presence, they will be filled with folly, vanity, and vexation.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

October 26, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

BEING to go out of town to-day, I started up before light to write to you, and hoped to have sent you a long letter; when, behold! I could not get at any paper. I am now waiting for a peep at Mr. B—— at his lodgings, who came to town last night; and I shall write as fast as I can till I see him.

I feel for you a little in the same way as you feel for yourself. I bear a friendly sympathy in your late sharp and sudden trial. I mourn with that part of you which mourns; but at the same time I rejoice in the proof you have, and which you give, that the Lord is with you of a truth. I rejoice on your account, to see you supported and comforted, and enabled to say, He has done all things well. I rejoice on my own account. Such instances of his faithfulness and all-sufficiency are very encouraging. We must all expect hours of trouble in our turn. We must all feel in our concernments the vanity and uncertainty of creature-comforts. What a mercy is it to know from our own past experience, and to have it confirmed to us by the experience of others, that the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and that he knoweth them that trust in him. Creatures are like candles, they waste while they afford us a little light, and we see them extinguished in their sockets one after another. But the light of the sun makes amends for them all. The Lord is so rich that he easily can, so good that he certainly will give his children more than he ever will take away. When his gracious voice reaches the heart, It is I, be not afraid; be still, and know that I am God: when he gives us an impression of his wisdom, power, love, and care, then the storm which attempts to rise in our natural passions is hushed into a calm; the flesh continues to feel, but the spirit is made willing. And something more than submission takes place,—a sweet resignation and acquiescence, and even a joy that we have any thing which we value, to surrender to his call.

I am yours &c.

END OF CARDIPHONIA.

DISCOURSES,

OR

SERMONS,

AS INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT.

— Στυλος και εδραιωμα της αληθειας. Και ομολογουμενως μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον· Θεος εφανερωθη εν σαρκι.—1 Tim. iii. 15, 16.

PREFACE.

The following Discourses were drawn up about twelve months since, when I expected a speedy opportunity of delivering them from the pulpit. As the views I then had are now over-ruled, I take this method of laying them before the public; that those who have thought proper to foretell the part I would have acted, and the doctrine I would have taught, if my desires had taken place, may be either satisfied or silenced.

Yet I should not have thought it worth my while, to give either myself or others this trouble, merely for my own vindication. Attempts of this kind usually imply too much of a man's importance to himself, to be either acceptable or successful. Or, at best, it can be a point of no great moment to my real happiness, what the few persons to whom my little name is known, are pleased to say or think of me. Nothing but great inattention to our true circumstances, can afford us leisure either to censure others, or to justify ourselves; unless when the interests of religion or morality are evidently concerned. A few years will fix and determine our characters beyond all possibility of mistake; and till then it would be vain to hope for it.

The true reasons, therefore, of this publication are, the importance of the subjects treated of; and the probability that, upon this occasion, many persons who have not yet considered them with the attention they deserve, may be induced (some from a motive of friendship, and others from curiosity) to read what might appear in my name, the rather for being mine.

Had I written with a design to print, I should have chosen to put my sentiments in another form; and perhaps a desire to avoid the censure of severe critics, would have made me more solicitous about expression and method. But as I profess to publish not what I might, but what I really would have spoken, I could not allow myself to deviate from my first draught, except in a few places where I thought the sense entangled, ambiguous, or defective. For the same reason, I am forced to decline the judgment and correction of my friends, the advantages of which, as well as my own great need of them, I have more than once experienced.

If there is found in some places a coincidence of thought or expression, I hope it will be excused; as I had not the least apprehension, at the time of composing, that what I designed for distinct and separate occasions, would ever appear abroad in one view.

In a word, so far as these Essays are mine, I entreat a candid perusal; and that those who read them in order to form their judgment of the author, do not make their estimate from a sentence here and there, but have the patience to read them throughout. So far as what they contain is agreeable to scripture, reason, and experience, any apology would be impertinent. In this case they deserve attention. Every particle of truth is valuable in itself, by whatever means or instruments it may be conveyed to us; and, like a torch, displays itself by its own light, without any relation to the hand that bears it

Liverpool, January 1, 1760

DISCOURSES, &c.

AS INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT.

SERMON I.

ON THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HUMAN HEART.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. JER. xvii 9, 10.

THE prophet Jeremiah had a hard task. He was appointed to inculcate unwelcome truths upon a vain, insensible people. He had the grief to find all his expostulations and warnings, his prayers and tears, had no other effect than to make them account him their enemy, and to draw reproach and persecution upon himself. He lived to see the accomplishment of his own predictions; to see the land of his nativity desolated, the city destroyed, the people almost extirpated, and the few who remained, transported into a distant country, to end their days in captivity.

Those who have resolved, honestly and steadily, to declare the word of the Lord, have, in all ages, found a part of his trial: the message they have had to deliver has been disagreeable and disregarded. It is no hard matter to frame discourses that shall meet with some degree of general approbation; nor is it difficult to foresee the reception which plain truth must often meet with: but those who undertake a charge must perform it; and ministers are bound to declare to the people every thing that regards their welfare, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. If the watchman sees the danger coming, and does not blow the trumpet, to give the most public notice possible, he is answerable for all the evils that may follow. This is applied as a caution to the prophet Ezekiel: and undoubtedly, every one who administers in holy things is concerned in it. "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand," Ezek. xxxiii. Let this awful passage plead our excuse, if at any time we seem too urgent, or too plain, in our discourses. Too plain or urgent we cannot be. Our business is most important; opportunities are critical and precious. It is at the hazard of our souls if we speak deceitfully; and at the hazard of yours if we speak in vain.

In the preceding verses, the prophet gives us a striking image of the opposition between the righteous and the wicked, in their present state, their hopes, and their end. The one is compared to a tree; the other to heath and stubble: the one planted by streams of water; the other, exposed on the salt burning

desert: the one, green, flourishing, all full of fruit; the other, parched and withering. The hope of the one is fixed on the Lord, the all-sufficient, the almighty God; the rash dependence of the other, on a frail, feeble arm of flesh. Suitable to this difference is their end: the one, blessed, provided against all evil, so that he shall not be careful in the year of drought; the other, cursed, and cut off from the expectations of any amendment. "He shall not see when good cometh." The immediate design was perhaps to shew the Jews, that there was no way to avert the judgments of God, and to avoid the impending evils which threatened them, but by returning to the Lord, who had begun to smite, and who alone was able to heal them. But this they refused. They preferred their own contrivances: they leaned upon an arm of flesh; sometimes upon Egypt, sometimes upon Assyria: one while presuming upon force; another while upon cunning. They were fruitful in expedients, and when one broken cistern failed them, they had recourse to another. But the prophet denounces the curse of God both on them and their supports; subjoining the words of my text, which may be understood, either as a farther proof of what he had said, or an assigned cause of that obstinacy and perverseness he had complained of; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

But, without confining the words to the first occasion of their delivery, I shall consider them, as teaching us a doctrine abundantly confirmed by many other passages of scripture, "that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked;" which I shall endeavour to illustrate in a plain familiar way. I shall, secondly, from the next verse, enforce this observation, that the heart (bad as it is) is incessantly under the divine inspection and examination: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." I shall, thirdly, consider the issue and design of this inquest; that every man may, in the end, receive according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. And may the Lord enable us so to try and examine ourselves here, that hereafter we may be found unblameable and without rebuke before him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. The heart is here characterised, first, As deceitful, and that above, or in all things: secondly, As desperately wicked; in so dangerous, so deplorable a state, as is not to be conceived or found out. "Who can know it?" The word in the original [אנוש] which we translate *desperately wicked*, signifies a mortal, incurable disease: a disease which, seizing on the vitals, affects and threatens the whole frame; and which no remedy can reach. This idea leads us to that first transgression, whereby man departing from God, fatally destroyed his soul's health, and sunk into that state so pathetically described by Isaiah, chap. i. "The whole head is sick," all the powers of the understanding disordered; "and the whole heart faint," all the springs of the affections enfeebled. "From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness, but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores:" the evil growing worse continually, and no help or helper at hand: "they have not been closed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment." In consequence of this deep-rooted disorder, the heart is deceitful; that is, it deceives and fails us in every instance; it promises more than it can perform; it misleads us with vain desires; and mocks us with unsuccessful efforts; like the faint attempts of a sick man, to perform those actions which require a state of sound health and strength. That this is indeed the case, will (I think) appear from the following particulars; to which I intreat your attention.

Scripture and reason do jointly assure us, that all we see is the work of an Almighty Being.—The heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, and even the grass and flowers of the field, loudly proclaim the presence, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God: yet behold the extreme insensibility of man! The wisest of our species, in those places where divine revelation was not known, ever mistook the effect for the cause, and ascribed that honour to the creature which is due only to the Creator. This was the very best of the case; for, in general, they sunk still lower, to worship stocks and stones: nay, to the eternal reproach of the natural understanding in the things of God, the more civilized any nation was, the more renowned for arts and arms, the farther they were removed from those they termed barbarians; so much the more vile and contemptible the idolatry they established generally proved. The wisdom of the Egyptians paid divine honours to cats, monkies, and the vilest reptiles. The fine taste of the Greeks consecrated those for gods, who, if they had lived amongst men, would have been deemed the pests of society; gods who were, professedly, both patterns and patrons of the most shameful vices. The prowess of the Romans established altars to fear and paleness. So deeply were they infatuated, so totally lost to common sense, that the apostle Paul's worst enemies could find no more plausible accusation against him, in one of the politest cities then in the world, than that he had ventured to affirm, "they were no gods who were made with hands."

Thus stood the case with heathens: let us now come nearer home. It is to be feared the greatest difference between them and the generality of us called Christians is, that we do not partake in their gross outward idolatry. In other respects, our insensibility is perhaps as much greater than theirs, as o

superior knowledge renders it more inexcusable. We acknowledge a God: that there is but one; that he is the cause of all things; that in him we live, and move, and have our being. Had the poor heathens known this, we may judge by their application to their mistaken worship, it would have had some influence on their practice. But what numbers of us live altogether as "without God in the world." I come not here to make invectives; let conscience judge and give evidence accordingly. What do we think of the perpetual presence of God around us, and within us? We know that he is acquainted with all our thoughts, words, and actions; yet are we not more effectually restrained and awed by the presence of our fellow-worms, than by the regard of that eye which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun? How are we affected by the works of God? Has not the appearance of a fine day, or the beauty of an extensive prospect, a force to extort a sense of satisfaction from every one? but how few are there of us that can realize and acknowledge the hand of the glorious author of these things? How seldom, and how faintly, do we adopt the reflection of David? "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Psal. viii. What is our judgment of the word of God, that glorious message of love, in which he has pointed out to us the way of salvation? Is not this book the least read, the least admired, and the least understood of any? We are presently affected, we enter with all our spirit into the moving incidents (as we term them) of a romance or tragedy, though we know they are not founded on truth, nor have any relation to ourselves; but we can read the history of Jesus Christ, his life and doctrines, his death and passion, with indifference, though we say, all he spoke, or did, or suffered, was for our sakes. What are our thoughts of that eternity to which we are posting, and to which, for aught we know, a few hours may introduce us? Is it not in the power of the merest trifle that occurs to hide this important point from our view? It were easy to multiply particulars: but are not these sufficient to shew the deceitfulness, the desperate wickedness of the heart? Let me add one more: the judgments of God are now abroad in the world for these things. We have warnings all around us. We know that many fruitful lands in our neighbourhood are in a manner turned into a wilderness, for the sins of the inhabitants. Every post brings us tidings of some new desolation, and we cannot tell how soon the case may be our own; but we have neither sympathy for our fellow-creatures nor concern for ourselves. We hear, we pity, we forget in the same instant: but these things are remote. Is, then, what we see and feel more laid to heart? Our friends and acquaintance are taken from amongst us daily, some of them suddenly, in the midst of their warmest pursuits, or just upon the accomplishment of their most favourite schemes: we drop an unmeaning tear, and fly to every officious vanity for relief. Perhaps we are visited ourselves, and brought down to the borders of the grave; but even against this we are, for the most part, proof, or, if we feel a slight impression, it gradually wears off with the disease, and we return as soon as we recover to our former follies with redoubled ardour.

This is a slight view of the insensibility of the human heart: let us now consider its ingratitude. The Israelites were a sample of all mankind in this respect. God visited them in Egypt in the midst of their affliction. Without any application on their part, he undertook and effected their deliverance: he brought them from among their enemies "with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm;" he led them safely through the wilderness; he screened them with a cloud, from the piercing beams of the sun; he gave them light by night, in a pillar of fire; he fed them with bread from heaven, and caused streams to flow in the sandy desert; he made a covenant with them, and chose them for his peculiar people; he destroyed all their enemies before them; and, at length, put them in the full and peaceable possession of a land flowing with milk and honey. Interwoven with the history of God's gracious dealings with them, we have an account of their behaviour towards him, which was a continual series of rebellion, perverseness, murmuring, and disobedience. And are we better than they? In no wise. If we had leisure to consider the natural, civil, and religious advantages we enjoy as a nation, it would appear that we likewise have long been a peculiarly favoured people. The eye of the Lord our God has been upon us continually for good, and we have reason to say, "He has not dealt so with any nation." The history of all ages and countries affords us no instance of national prosperity that can be compared, either for degree or continuance, with what we have enjoyed since the Revolution: nor would it be easy, I fear, to find a parallel in any history of our great ingratitude. What I have said in the former article will necessarily infer this; for it is impossible that those who have so little sensibility, either of the value of the gifts of God, or of his hand in bestowing them, can be grateful. The seat of ingratitude is in the heart: the proof appears in words and actions. Now, what are the prevailing subjects of conversation amongst us? Are the great things that God has done for us, the high obligations we are under to him, the comforts of our holy religion, and the nature of that blessed hope set before us by the gospel, in the number?

On the contrary, is not the least hint of these things in company, for the most part, received with reserve, if not with contempt and disgust? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." God, and the things of God, have little place there; but levity, detraction, ill-temper, and, not seldom, profaneness and obscenity, in our discourses, too plainly discover the nature of the fountain from whence they flow. And if we look upon the actions of men in general, they are but of a piece with their words; engrossed by business, or enslaved to pleasure, for a season all upon the stretch in amassing treasures, and then perhaps as restless and eager to dissipate them. Whatever passion rules them for the time, or whatever changes they may admit in their schemes, it is too plain, that a principle of gratitude to God, and a conscious desire to please him, have little influence either in forming or executing their plans. If these things are so, we have another instance of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart: it is full of the blackest ingratitude.

Need any thing be added to these two charges? Have we not said enough to confirm the prophet's assertion? If not, we can name a third particular, if possible, more absurd and inexcusable than either of the former. Man is not only insensible of the greatest part of those things which most concern him, and ungrateful and disobedient to his maker and preserver, his best and only friend, but he is proud too. Though he has nothing but what he has received, has received nothing but what he has perverted and mismanaged, and must render a strict account of his mismanagement, yet he is proud. We have already seen his blindness and baseness; there wanted only pride to make him a monster indeed. And need we spend time to prove this? No. This at least is an universal evil. Any man may easily perceive it in every man but himself; and every thinking man may perceive it working within himself incessantly. Whether we are alone or in company, whether with friends or enemies, with those above us or those below us, pride will insinuate. Nay, in the immediate presence of God, when we come together to implore his mercy, while the most humbling confessions are upon our lips, and we are charging ourselves as most miserable, helpless sinners, even here pride will find us out. Those must be great strangers to themselves, who are not sensible of this. Now, why is dust and ashes proud? proud of our failings! proud of our infirmities! Is it not from hence, because the heart is deplorably diseased, desperately wicked, and deeply deceitful?

I shall pursue this point no farther. I shall not attempt to enumerate, at present, those "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications thefts, and blasphemies" (Mark vii. 21), which, our Lord assures us, do perpetually "proceed from the heart." I chose to insist on insensibility, ingratitude, and pride, because these are the vices which, in common life, we most condemn, are willing to think ourselves most free from, and can the least bear to be charged with. And it must be allowed, that between man and man there is often the appearance of much generosity, gratitude, and condescension; but what will it avail us, that we stand upon some tolerable terms towards each other in these respects, if we are guilty before God? "The Lord seeth not as man seeth" (1 Sam. xvi. 7): he cannot be deceived or put off with a fair appearance; for he searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. This is the next point to be considered.

II. That the heart, with all its workings, and all its faults, is incessantly under the divine inspection and examination: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." The heart and reins, as distinguished in scripture-phrase, signify those different powers of the mind, the affections and the thoughts. The words search and try have an emphasis in the original, which cannot be reached without a paraphrase, if at all.

The Lord searches [חקר] the heart: he traces, investigates the inmost principle of our souls to its first rise, with, if I may so speak, a mathematical accuracy. He tries [בחן] the reins: he watches every rising thought; he brings it to the test of his most pure law; he examines it with the utmost exactness, as a refiner assays his metals, with a purpose to reject whatever is inferior to the prescribed standard. To form a more just idea of this scrutiny, let us ask ourselves how we could bear to be obliged to declare aloud, in full company, every thought which passes through our minds, every wish and desire of which we are conscious, without the least reserve or exception? I am persuaded there are few people so lost to shame, but, if they were brought to this trial, they would rather chuse to die than comply with it. Some things they would perceive, especially upon such a provocation, which they could hardly, upon any terms, prevail with themselves to express. The Lord has mercifully kept us from the knowledge of each other's hearts, any farther than we are willing to disclose ourselves; for, were every man compelled to speak all he thinks, there would be an end of society; and man would no more venture to dwell with man than with tigers and bears. We know what mischief one ungoverned tongue may sometimes occasion: now, the tongue can do no evil, any farther than as it is an instrument of disclosing the hidden things of the heart; yet it is but a small part of these the worst tongue is capable of disclosing. What, then, would be the case, if all our hearts were open, all our desires known to one another? What a mixture of confusion

and defiance, shame, rage, fear, and contempt, would overspread every countenance! and yet thus we are exposed to the searching eye of a pure and holy God! The Lord knows the thoughts of man's heart, that they are vain. He long ago declared the result of his observation: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Gen. vi. And though the world was drowned for this, matters were not mended afterwards; for, upon a second survey, the judgment amounts to the same: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips." Psal. xiv. Is. liv. Compare Rom. iii. How it was in our blessed Saviour's time, we have already observed; and neither scripture nor experience gives us reason to hope it has been better since, or is now. The apostle Paul has assured us, "That, in the last days" (a character which, it is likely, coincides with our days) 'perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," 2 Tim. iii.—Surely, I say, if these are marks of the last days, they must be already commenced. However, we see, upon the whole, how vile and hateful our hearts must appear in the sight of a heart-searching God.

III. One thing more we have to consider: That the Lord does not observe the heart of man with the indifference of a mere spectator, but as an impartial and an inflexible judge; "that he may give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." This was the third particular to be spoken to.

But, alas! what can be said to this? Is it not sufficient to fill our souls with astonishment, and to cause all faces to gather blackness, to hear, that the Lord has purposed to render to every man according to his works; and that he sits judge, not only upon outward actions, but examines the very thoughts and intents of the heart? Dare any of us abide the issue of such a trial? Which of us will presume to say, I am clean? To what purpose can any of us plead, I have not committed adultery, if God charges us with every inordinate glance, with every offence of the eye? What will avail, that we have never assaulted the life of our neighbour, if every angry word, every degree of ill-will or revenge, is considered as murder in God's sight? It will not suffice to say, I am no thief or extortioner, unless we can clear ourselves of the most distant wish of possessing what was the property of another. If we are sure that we have not forsworn ourselves, but have performed to the Lord our oaths, it is only thus far well, that we shall not be condemned for open and actual perjury; but if we have at any time mentioned, or even thought of the name of God, without the highest habitual reverence, we have taken his name in vain; and he has declared he will not hold us guiltless. That this is no gloss of my inventing but the very words of truth, the declaration of him by whom we must be one day judged, the 5th chapter of Matthew will inform you. There a wanton glance is styled adultery; an angry expression censured as murder; and to speak unadvisedly even of the hairs of our head, is deemed a branch of profane swearing. And why? because all these spring from the heart, which is "naked and open," without either covering or concealment, "in the sight of him with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. This is thought uncomfortable doctrine; and not without reason, could we go no farther. For there is nothing in heaven or in earth, in time or eternity, that affords the least glimpse of comfort to fallen man, if either God is strict to mark what is amiss, or if he, trusting in himself, presumes to plead with his Maker. The divine law requires perfect, unremitted, unsinning obedience; it denounces a curse upon the least failure; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10.); every one, without exception of person or circumstance, that continueth not, from the beginning to the end of life, in all things, great and small, to do them, τον τελειον αιωνα, to finish them, to do them completely, without any defect either in matter or manner. Most uncomfortable doctrine indeed, were there no remedy provided. For the law of God is as eternal and unchangeable as his nature: it must not, it cannot be attempered or brought down to our capacities; neither can the penalty be evaded: for the God of truth has said, has sworn, that "the soul that sinneth shall die," Ezek. xviii. 4. Here, then, we must receive "a sentence of death in ourselves," 2 Cor. i. 9. Here, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God," Rom. iii 19. Here we must say, with the apostle "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall be no flesh justified in his sight" (Gal. ii. 16.): "for by the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. iii. 20. O that we could all sincerely say so; that we were brought to this, to feel and confess our lost, undone estate, and our utter inability to save ourselves! then with joy should I proceed to what I have had in my

eye all along. For with what view have I said so much upon so disagreeable a subject? why have I attempted to lay open some of the depths of the heart? but that I might more fully illustrate the wonderful grace and goodness of God, vouchsafed to us in the gospel; and at the same time shew the utter impossibility, not of being saved at all, but of finding salvation in any other way than in that which God has appointed. For, behold! God so loved the world (John iii.), that he sent his Son to accomplish that for us, which the law could not do through the weakness of our flesh, Rom. viii. Jesus Christ performed perfect obedience to the law of God in our behalf; he died, and satisfied the penalty due to our sins; he rose from the grave as our representative; he is entered into heaven as our forerunner. "He has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious," Psalms lxviii. He is "exalted" on high "to bestow repentance and remission of sins" (Acts v.) on all that seek to him. He has established his ordinances for this purpose: he has commanded his people not to neglect the assembling of themselves together. He has charged his ministers at such seasons to declare first the guilty, deplorable condition of mankind, and then to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, by faith which is in him. He has promised to be with them in this work to the end of the world. He has promised, that where his word is faithfully preached, he will accompany it with a spirit and power that will bear down all opposition. He has promised, that while we are speaking to the ear, he will, by his secret influence, apply it to the heart, and open it to receive and embrace the truth spoken, as in the case of Lydia. Who would venture to preach a doctrine so unpalatable to the carnal mind, as Jesus Christ, and him crucified? Who would undertake so ungrateful a task as to depreciate that noble creature man, and arraign him publicly of insensibility, ingratitude, pride, and deceit; were it not that we have, first, a command, and that, at our peril, to speak plain, and, secondly, a promise that we shall not speak in vain? Not that we can expect to be universally received: The time is come, when many "will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 3.); but some there will be, whom God is pleased to save by the foolishness of preaching, so called. Some such I would hope are in this assembly. To such I say, think not to satisfy the divine justice by any poor performances of your own; think not to cleanse or expiate the evil of your hearts by any of your own inventions; but, "behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29. He died, that you may live: he lives, that you may live for ever. Put, therefore, your trust in the Lord; for with him is plenteous redemption. His sufferings and death are a complete final propitiation for sin. "He is able to save to the uttermost;" and he is as willing as he is able. It was this brought him down from heaven; for this he emptied himself of all glory, and submitted to all indignity. His humiliation, expiates our pride; his perfect love atones for our ingratitude; his exquisite tenderness pleads for our insensibility. Only believe; commit your cause to him by faith and prayer. As a Priest, he shall make atonement for your sins, and present your persons and your services acceptable before God. As a Prophet, he shall instruct you in the true wisdom, which maketh wise to salvation; he shall not only cause you to know his commandments, but to love them too: he shall write them in your hearts. As a King, he shall evermore mightily defend you against all your enemies. He shall enable you to withstand temptations, to support difficulties, to break through all opposition. He shall supply you with every thing you need, for this life or a better, out of the unsearchable riches of his grace. He shall strengthen you to overcome all things; to endure to the end; and then he shall give you a place in his kingdom; a seat near his throne; a crown of life; a crown of glory, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Dec. 3, 1778.

SERMON II.

ON THE SAVIOUR AND HIS SALVATION.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.
1 Tim i 15.

THOUGH the apostle Paul has written largely and happily upon every branch of christian doctrine and practice; and with respect to his writings, as well as his preaching could justly assert, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God; yet there are two points which seem to have been (if I may so speak) his favourite topics, which he most frequently repeats, most copiously insists on, and takes every occasion of introducing. The one is, to display the honours, powers, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, to make known the great things God had done for his own soul. How his heart was filled and fired with the first of these, is evident from almost every chapter of his Epistles. When he speaks of the mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh." and the exceeding grace and love declared to a lost world through him, the utmost powers of language fall short of his purpose. With a noble freedom he soars beyond the little bounds of criticism; and, finding the most expressive words too weak and faint for his

ideas, he forms and compounds new ones, heaps one hyperbole upon another; yet, after his most laboured essays to do justice to his subject, he often breaks off in a manner that shews he was far from being satisfied with all he could say. This reflection is most obvious to those who can read him in the original: but no disadvantages of a translation can wholly confine that inimitable ardour with which he seems to pour his whole soul into his words, when he is speaking of his Lord and Saviour. And he who can read the first chapters of his epistles to the Ephesians, Colosians, and Hebrews, the second to the Philippians, or many similar passages, with indifference, must be, I say, not merely a person of small devotion, but of little taste and sensibility.

And how deeply his mind was impressed with the mercies he had received in his conversion and call, is equally conspicuous. He takes every occasion to aggrandize the goodness of God to himself; to exaggerate and deplore the guilt and misery of his former life, in which he once trusted; and to lament the small returns he was able to make for such blessings; even when he could say, without boasting, that he had "laboured more abundantly" than the most diligent and zealous of his fellow-servants.

A powerful abiding sense of these two points upon the apostle's mind, have given rise to many sudden, lively, and beautiful digressions in the course of his writings. The context to the passage I have read is of this kind. Having incidentally spoken of the gospel in the 11th verse, he is suddenly struck with the reflection of his own misery while ignorant of it, and the wonderful goodness of God, in affording him the knowledge of salvation, and honouring him, who was before a blasphemer, with a commission to publish the same glad tidings to others. This thought suspends his argument, and fills his heart and mouth with praise. And having acknowledged, that "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant" towards himself, he subjoins the words of the text, for an encouragement to others; assuring us, that his case was not so peculiar, but that multitudes might be partakers with him in the same hope of mercy.

The words easily resolve into two parts:

1*st*, A short, but comprehensive proposition, including the purport of the whole gospel, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

2*d*, A commendation of this doctrine in a twofold respect, "as a faithful saying," and as "worthy of all acceptation;" each of these illustrated by the instance of himself, when he adds, "of whom I am chief."

I. The apostle well knew the different reception the gospel would meet in the world; that many poor, guilty souls, trembling under a sense of sin and unworthiness, would very hardly be persuaded, that such sinners as they could be saved at all. To these he recommends it as "a faithful saying" founded upon the immutable counsel, promise, and oath of God, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" sinners in general; "the chief of sinners;" such as he represents himself to have been. He knew likewise, that many others, from a mistaken opinion of their own goodness, or a mistaken dependence on something of their own chusing, would be liable to undervalue this faithful saying. For the sake of these he adds, "it is worthy of all acceptation." None are so bad but the gospel affords them a ground of hope; none are so good as to have any just ground of hope without it. There was a time when St. Paul could have made a fair profession of himself likewise; he could say, "circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to the righteousness which is by the law, blameless," Phil. iii. But he has been since taught, "to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;" and is content to style himself the chief of sinners.

Having thus attempted to shew the design and meaning of the words, I propose, somewhat more at large, to unfold the proposition, and point out some of those important and extensive truths it contains. I say some of them; for it is not possible that either men or angels can fully sound the depth of this one sentence, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I shall afterwards infer, and enforce the other part of the text, "that it is indeed a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." And may He, who came into the world to procure salvation for sinners, and is now exalted on high to bestow it, accompany the whole with his promised blessing.

The tenor of the proposition readily suggests three inquiries: 1*st*, Who this person is, here spoken of, Jesus Christ? 2*d*, What is meant by the salvation he is said to have undertaken? 3*d*, By what means he effected it?

Let us, first, speak of this gracious, this wonderful person, Jesus Christ. We already bear his name as professed Christians; and we speak of him as our Master, and our Lord; and so far we say well. But, as he has told us, many will call him Lord at the great day, to whom he will profess, "I never knew you whence you are, depart;" so it is to be feared there are many now, that outwardly acknowledge him, who neither know whence he is, nor who he is. Though we have Moses and the prophets, the apostles and evangelists, continually with us; though it is the immediate aim and intent of all their writings, in every history, promise, prophecy, type, ceremony, and law, to set him before our eyes; and though there is hardly an image in the material crea-

tion but is adopted by the scriptures to shadow forth his excellency; ignorance of Jesus Christ, and what he has done for his people, is the great cause that religion appears so low and contemptible to some, and is found so tedious and burdensome by others. Let us, therefore, attend to the record God has given of his Son; for I propose in this article to say little of my own, but to lay before you the express, powerful, indubitable testimony of holy scripture.

And here we are taught, first, That Jesus Christ is *God*. The first words of St. John's Gospel are full to this point: "In the beginning" (that is, at the commencement of time and things, when as yet nothing else existed) "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." To prevent a possibility of mistake, and to confirm the eternity of this divine Word in the strongest manner, it is immediately added, "The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by him." And lest this likewise should either be contested or misunderstood, it is guarded by an universal negative, "without him was not any thing made that was made." Farther, to prevent, if possible, the surmise that, in these glorious works, the eternal Word acted with a deputed power only, the apostle subjoins, "In him was life," life essentially; and from him, as the fountain, life and light proceeded to his creatures: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." To this agrees the declaration of St. Paul, "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him;" by his power and wisdom, and for his glory and pleasure. "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. Elsewhere he speaks of him expressly, as "over all God blessed for ever; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It were easy to enlarge this way; but I shall content myself with observing this general proof of the divinity of Christ, that the scriptures, which were given to make us wise to salvation, do ascribe to him the names of God, particularly Jehovah; the essential attributes of God, such as eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence; the peculiar works of God, as creation, providence, redemption, and forgiveness of sin; and, finally, commands us to pay him those divine honours, and to rely on him with that absolute dependence, which would be idolatry if referred anywhere below the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth.

Again, we learn from scripture, that Christ is truly and properly *Man*. This is indeed wonderful! therefore styled, "the great mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. But that he of whom we have begun to speak is the very person who came into the world to save sinners, we have abundant proof. The apostle John, whose testimony we have already cited, says, a few verses lower (John i. 14.), "And the Word" (that glorious Word, which was God with God) "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory;" (that is, we his disciples, whose eyes were spiritually enlightened, for the world in general saw nothing of it;) "as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In other places it is said, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses (Matth. viii 16), and "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," Heb. iv. 15. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," Heb. ii. 14. "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," Gal. iv. Many are the mistakes of mortals, and wide the extremes into which mistaken mortals run. Some have rashly ventured to deny our Lord's divinity; some have wildly and fancifully explained away his humanity; but may we, through grace, abide by the scriptural truth, and be directed in the midst of the path of judgment.

From this mystical union of the divine and human nature in one person, the scriptures speak of him, thirdly, under the character of a *Mediator*, the "one mediator between God and man." To this idea the names *Jesus Christ*, which are as ointment poured forth, direct us in their original import. The former, which signifies the *Saviour*, pointing out the success and efficacy of his undertaking; the latter, which is the same with *Messiah* or the *Anointed*, expressing both his divine appointment thereto, and the complete supply of all grace and power, wherewith he was filled for the discharge of it. Thus much for the person spoken of.

We proceed, in the next place, to consider the design of his appearance in the world, "to save sinners." And as the idea of deliverance presupposes a state of distress, it will be necessary previously to inquire into the condition of those whom he came to save, which is indeed emphatically implied in the appellation given them, sinners. Man having broken that law under which he was created, and with which his happiness was closely connected, fell under accumulated ruin. The image of God, in which he was formed, was defaced, and a far different image set up in his heart, even of him who had seduced him from his allegiance; darkness in the understanding, rebellion in the will, sensuality in the affections; the justice of God threatening a penalty he could neither satisfy nor sustain; the commandments of God still challenging an obedience he had no longer any power to yield. The very gifts and bounties of God, with which he was encompassed, designed not only for his comfort, but his

struction, to lead him, as by so many steps, to their gracious author, became eventually the occasions of withdrawing him farther from his duty, and increasing as well as aggravating his ingratitude. Thus stood man towards his Maker. With regard to his fellow-creatures, self-love and inordinate desires having raised a variety of interfering interests in the breasts of all, peace withdrew from the earth. Every man's heart and hand was set against his neighbour, and violence, rage, envy, and confusion overspread the world. Nor could he be easier in himself: hurried by restless desires towards things either unsatisfying or unattainable, haunted with cares, tortured with pains, tired with opposition, shocked with disappointment; conscience, like the hand that appeared at Belshazzar's feast (Daniel, v.), writing bitter things against him, when outward circumstances allowed a short repose, and vanity, like a worm, destroying the root of every flower that promised the fairest bloom of success. Behold a few outlines of the picture of fallen man! miserable in his life, more miserable in the continual dread of losing such a life, miserable most of all, that neither his fancy can feign, nor his fear conceive, the consequences of the death he dreads, which will introduce him to the immediate presence, to the tribunal, of an incensed, almighty, ever-living God!

Such was the state from which Jesus Christ came to save us. He came to restore us to the favour of God; to reconcile us to ourselves and to each other; to give us peace and joy in life, hope and triumph in death, and after death, glory, honour, and immortality. For he came not merely to repair, and to restore, but to exalt; not only "that we might have life," the life we had forfeited, but "that we might have it more abundantly" (John, x.); that our happiness might be more exalted, our title more firm, and our possession more secure, than the state of Adam in paradise could boast, or than his posterity could have attained unto, if he had continued unsinning upon the tenor of the first covenant.

Now, could we suppose it possible that a set of innocent beings, without any default of their own, had sunk into a state of misery, we must confess it would have been great grace and favour in the Lord Jesus to save them. But let us not forget the stress laid in the text upon the word sinners. He came to save, not the unfortunate, but the ungodly, Rom. v. How, then, should every heart glow with love to him, who hath thus loved us! If any of us can hear or speak of this subject with indifference or disgust, it is to be feared we are quite strangers to the nature or the necessity of that salvation with which God has graciously visited his people. Let us no more usurp the sacred words of generosity, sensibility, or gratitude, if this astonishing instance of divine goodness leaves us cold and unimpressed; especially if to this we join the consideration of the third point I proposed to speak of, By what means Jesus Christ affected this salvation for sinners.

In the passage before us, it is only said, that he came into the world on this account; which teaches us, this was the sole design of his advent; and that, coming on set purpose for this, he would leave nothing undone that was necessary to accomplish it. He emptied himself of that divine glory and honour he possessed with the Father from eternity. "He bowed the heavens, and came down" to our earth; and that not with an external glory, as a celestial messenger, to constrain the attention and homage of mankind, "but was made of a woman" (Gal. iv.); not of high and noble extraction in the judgment of men, "but in the form of a servant;" born in a stable, laid in a manger, brought up in an obscure and contemptible place, and reputed no higher than the son of a carpenter. "He was despised and rejected of men; there was no form or comeliness in him" (Isa. liii.), to attract a general regard; on the contrary, "he came to his own, and his own received him not," John i. Farther, as he was made of a woman, he was "made under the law;" the one in order to the other; for this was the way divine wisdom had appointed, and which divine justice required, to make salvation possible to sinners. Eternal truth had pronounced tribulation, wrath, and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil. All men, in every age and place, had corrupted their ways before God; yet his mercy had designed, that where sin had abounded, grace should much more abound, Rom. viii. Jesus Christ was the grand expedient, in whom mercy and truth met together (Psal. lxxxv.), and the inflexible righteousness of God was brought to correspond and harmonize with the peace of sinful man. That justice might be satisfied, truth vindicated, and sinners saved, God so loved a lost world, that, when no inferior means could avail, when none in heaven or earth were willing, or worthy, or able, to interpose, "he gave his only-begotten Son," John iii. Jesus Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, "so loved the world," that he assumed our nature, undertook our cause, bore our sins, sustained our deserved punishment; and having done and suffered all that the case required, he is now gone before, "to prepare a place" (John iv.) for all that believe in him and obey him. Man lay under a double incapacity for happiness; he could neither keep the law of God in future, nor satisfy for his past breach and contempt of it. To obviate the former, Jesus Christ performed a perfect, unsinning obedience in our stead. To remove the latter he became "the propitiation for our sins;"

yielded up his life, as a prey, into the hands of murderers, and poured forth his precious blood, in drops of sweat in the garden, in streams from his side upon the cross. For this he endured the fiercest temptations of the devil, the scorn, rage, and malice of men, and drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God, when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin. His love carried him through all; and when he had finally overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. In few words, he lived and died for us when upon earth; nor is he unmindful of us in heaven, but lives and intercedes on our behalf. He continually executes the offices of prophet, priest, and king, to his people; instructing them by his word and Spirit; presenting their persons and prayers, acceptable to God through his merits; defending them by his power, from all their enemies, ghostly and bodily; and ordering, by his providence, all things to work together for their good, till at length they are brought home, to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

II. From what has been said, we may justly infer, in the first place "that this is," as the apostle styles it, "a faithful saying." When man first fell, God, in the midst of judgment remembering mercy, declared, unsought and undesired, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. In every succeeding age, he confirmed his purpose by types, promises, prophecies, and oaths. At length, in the fulness of time, Christ, the desire of all nations, came into the world, fulfilled all that had been foretold, and encouraged every humble penitent sinner to come unto him, that they might have life, pardon, and peace. To doubt, or to deny, his readiness to save, is, so far as in us lies, to make the word of God of none effect; it is, to charge God foolishly, as though, like the heedless unskilful builder in the gospel, he had begun to build that which was not to be finished. If, after all that is set before us, it is possible for any soul to miss salvation, that sincerely desires it, and seeks it in God's appointed way, it must be because the Lord Jesus Christ either cannot or will not save them. That he cannot, is flatly false; for, "all power is his in heaven and in earth" (Matth. xxviii); and it is particularly said, "that he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him" (Heb. vii.): and that he will not, is as false; for he himself hath said, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," John, vi.

We may infer, *2dly*, That this doctrine is not only faithful, but "worthy of all acceptation." And here, methinks, I could begin anew. A point so much mistaken by some, and neglected by most, rather requires a whole, or many discourses, than to be passed over in few words. The most high and wise God has esteemed the redemption of mankind so precious, "that he spared not his only Son," Rom. viii. And are there any amongst us, in a land of gospel-light and liberty, where the words of wisdom are sounding in our ears every day, that dare make light of this message, just give it a hearing, and return to their farms, their merchandise, and their diversions, as though this unspeakable grace of God called for no return? Alas! "How shall we escape if we neglect this salvation?" Heb. ii. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy. It was dangerous, it was destructive, to refuse him that spoke upon earth; take heed how you trifle with him that speaketh from heaven! To such as neglect this, "there remains no other sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation that shall devour his adversaries," Heb. x. Let none of us think it is well with us, merely because we were born and educated in a christian country, have means of instruction in our hands, and enjoy frequent opportunities of presenting ourselves before God in public worship. To thousands these, so far from being advantages, will greatly aggravate their condemnation, and point the sting of the never dying worm. Better were it for us to have been inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon (Luke x.), yea, of Sodom and Gomorrah, than to appear in judgment with no better plea than this. Neither let us speak peace to ourselves, because we are not so bad as others, but perhaps live decently and comfortably, are useful in society, and perform many things that are commonly called good works. If these works spring from a true love of God, if they are framed according to the rule of his word, if they are performed by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, they are undoubtedly good, and shall be rewarded before men and angels; if otherwise, you have already your reward, in the complaisance of your own minds, and the approbation of friends and acquaintance. The christianity of the New Testament imports more than all this. It is, to believe in Jesus Christ; so to believe in him, as to obey him in all his commands, to trust him in all his dispensations, to walk in his steps, copying out the bright example of his love, meekness, patience, self-denial, and active zeal for the glory of God and the good of mankind. It is, from a consciousness of our utter inability to perform these great things, to depend continually upon the promised aid and direction of his Holy Spirit, to seek this assistance by frequent fervent prayer, to offer up ourselves daily as living sacrifices unto God; and, finally, when we have done all, to be deeply sensible of our unworthiness of the least of his mercies, to confess ourselves unprofitable servants, and to place all our hopes

upon this faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Thus, from the consideration of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatness of our misery by nature, and the wonderful things he has done and suffered for our redemption, we may learn the complete security of that salvation he has provided, the extreme danger of neglecting it, and the folly and presumption of attempting to establish a righteousness of our own, independent of him who is appointed of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. In setting these things before you plainly and faithfully, I trust I have delivered my own soul. Time is short, life is precarious, and perhaps to some this may be the last opportunity of the kind that may be afforded them. God grant we may be wise in time, that, to-day, while it is called to-day, we may hear his voice. Then we shall understand more of the text than words can teach us; then we shall experience "a peace which passeth all understanding" (Phil. iv.); "a joy" which "a stranger intermeddleth not with" (Prov. xvi.); and a hope "full of glory," which shall be completed in the endless possession of those "pleasures which are at the right hand of God" (Psal. xvi.); where sin, and its inseparable attendant sorrow, shall cease for ever; where "there shall be no more grief, or pain, or fear" (Rev. xxi.); but every tear shall be wiped from every eye.

SERMON III.

ON THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

——And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.—Acts xi 26.

THE evangelist Luke having contributed his appointed part to the history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, proceeds, in the book we style the *Acts of the Apostles*, to inform us of the state and behaviour of those faithful followers he left behind him on earth, when he ascended in the name and behalf of his people, to that heaven from whence his love had brought him down. We are informed, that the gracious promises he had made while he was yet with them, began soon to take place; for, when the day of Pentecost was fully come (Acts ii.), the Holy Spirit descended powerfully upon them, qualified them for preaching the gospel to the whole world, and gave them an earnest of success in making their first essay the happy means of converting about three thousand souls.

The first believers, who were of one heart and one soul, who continued stedfast in the apostles doctrine, and had all things in common, would probably have been well content to have lived together in Jerusalem, till death had successively transplanted them to the Jerusalem which is above. But this was not to be their rest; and their Lord, who had appointed them to be "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world" (Matth. v.), made use of the rage of their enemies to effect that separation which those who are united by the grace of God are often so loath to yield to. Little did Herod and the Jews consider what would be the consequence of the persecution they raised against the church of Christ: but persecutors are always blind, and counteract their own designs. So here; for we are told, that those whom they scattered abroad "went every where preaching the word." Thus the word of the Lord "ran and was glorified;" their bitterest enemies contributing to push it forward, till, in a few years, it was published "from sea to sea," and "from the river to the ends of the earth," Psal. lxxii.

For a while these faithful followers of the Lamb were known only by particular names, according to the different humours of different places,—*Nazarenes, Galileans, the people of that way, pestilent fellows*, and the like; but at length, when they grew more numerous, when their societies were regularly formed, and their enemies universally alarmed, they began to bear a more general and emphatical name. St. Luke has informed us, that this was the case in fact, and has likewise told us where it first obtained; and as I suppose he did not this without some design, I shall endeavour to draw some observations for our use and direction, from this remark in the text, That "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch," which I shall divide into two: thus,—That the first general name by which the disciples were distinguished from the world, and united among themselves, was that of *Christians*; and, secondly, That this took place first at *Antioch*. Thus the propositions lie in the text; but, in treating of each, it may be more convenient to invert this order, and consider the latter as previous to the former.

Now, if we consider the state of the city of Antioch, before, at the time, and since the event which is here recorded; from each of these views we may gather some lesson of instruction for ourselves, which ought to be our view in all we read, but especially when we read those books "which are able to make us wise unto salvation," and where no one sentence is insignificant. But let us not forget, with all we read and hear concerning religion, to mingle our frequent prayers to the great Author and Fountain of all grace, for that aid and assistance of his Holy Spirit, without which we can do nothing to advantage.

Antioch, the capital of Syria, built about three hundred years before Christ, had been

long the most flourishing city of the East. The most remarkable circumstance of its ancient state, as suiting our present purpose, was its having been the seat and residence of Antiochus, the most cruel and inveterate enemy of the church and people of God; the most direct and eminent type of that Antichrist who was afterwards to appear in the world; spoken of expressly by prophecy in Daniel, chap. xi.; the completion of which you may see at large in the first book of Maccabees, in Josephus, and more briefly in the 79th and 80th Psalms. But behold the wisdom, the power, and the providence of God! when his people were brought low, he helped them; he set those bounds to the rage of the adversary which could not be broken through; and, at length, in his appointed time, he erected this first general standard of the gospel upon the very spot where his grand enemy had so long encamped, and from whence his pernicious counsels and enterprizes had so far proceeded. The application of this is very suitable to the times in which we now live. We see a powerful combination against the Protestant interest. Our enemies are many and mighty: their designs, we have reason to believe, are deep laid, and their efforts unwearied. Once and again our hopes have been almost swallowed up; and though we, through the singular goodness of God, have hitherto escaped, the storm has fallen heavy upon our brethren abroad. What may be the immediate issue of the present threatening appearances, we know not; but we may encourage ourselves, from the experience of past ages, as well as from the sure promises of scripture, that however the kings of the earth may assemble, and the rulers take counsel together (Psal. ii.), God has a hook in their nose, and a bridle in their jaws (Isa. xxxvii.); and all their force and policy shall at last bring about what they least desire and intend,—the welfare and glory of God's church. He that caused the christian name go forth first at Antioch, where the truth of God had been most eminently and successfully opposed, can likewise introduce a temper and worship truly christian, in those places which at present seem destitute of either. And for this it is our duty continually to pray.

Again, if we consider the state of Antioch at the time the disciples were first called Christians there, we may learn how to form a judgment of our profession. This city was then luxurious and dissolute to a proverb, even in Asia, where luxury and effeminacy were universally prevalent. Whether this name was assumed by the disciples, or imposed by their enemies, we cannot doubt but that, in common repute, it was a term of the most extreme reproach and ignominy. Nor can I suppose the worst appellations any sect in succeeding ages has been doomed to bear, have implied half of that contempt which an inhabitant of Antioch or Daphne expressed when he called a man a Christian. If we imagine a sect of people, who, at this time, in France, should style themselves the disciples of the late Damien, and be called after his name, we may perhaps form some idea of what the people of Antioch understood by the word Christian. The apostle assures us, that he and his brethren were "accounted the filth and offscouring of all things" (1 Cor. iv.), ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου—πάντων περίψημα. He has chosen two words of the most vile and despicable signification; which, I believe, no two words in our language will fully express. The outward state of things is since changed, and the external profession of christianity is now no reproach; but let us not imagine the nature of things is changed too. It was then received as a maxim, That "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii.): and it is a truth still founded upon scripture, and confirmed by experience. If we know nothing of it in our own cases, it is because our tempers and manners have hitherto been too conformable to that wicked world which in our baptisms we were engaged to renounce. I shall have occasion to speak farther upon this point before I close; in the mean time, here is a test to examine ourselves by. If we could not glory in the christian name, under the same circumstances as the disciples bore it at Antioch, we are yet unworthy of it. Let conscience judge.

Once more, Antioch, the city where the gospel once so flourished, that from thence the whole christian church received that name by which it is still called, is now no more. It has been a heap of ruins more than five hundred years. The light of the gospel has been long withdrawn; gaiety and festivity are likewise forgot. Slavery, imposture, and barbarism, have blotted out the resemblance, and even the remembrance of what it once was. O that our yet happy land could from hence take a timely warning! Our privileges are great; perhaps greater, all things considered, than any nation has possessed since the days of Solomon. Our preservation hitherto has been wonderful; often have we been in extreme danger, but have always found deliverance at hand. Yet let us not be high-minded; our sins and aggravations (it is to be feared) have been, and still are, very great likewise; and God, we see, is no more a respecter of places than of persons. Antioch is ruined; Philadelphia, which received so honourable a testimony from the mouth of the Lord himself (Rev. iii.), has been long since destroyed. Let us beware of boasting; let us not presume too much on what we are; nor say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Jer. vii. We are the bulwark of the Protestant interest, and none can hurt us. If the Lord is with us, it

is true; if we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, we are safe; but, if otherwise, we know not how soon God may visit us with his heavy judgments, war, famine, discord, or pestilence; till we become a warning to others, as others are now proposed warnings to us. Our liberties, our properties, our religion, are in God's hands; may he incline our hearts to true repentance, lest at length these blessings should be taken from us, and given to a people that will bring forth more fruit.

There is an ambiguity in the original word *χρηματισθαι*, which our translation renders *called*; for, though that is the more general sense it bears in Heathen writers, wherever it occurs in the New Testament, except in this passage, and in Rom. vii. 3, it signifies to be taught or warned by a revelation from heaven. Thus it is spoken of Joseph and the wise men (Matth. ii.); Simeon (Luke ii.); Cornelius (Acts x.); Noah (Heb. xi.); and elsewhere. It does not therefore appear quite certain from the text, whether the disciples chose this name for themselves, or the wits of the time fixed it upon them as a mark of infamy; or, lastly, whether it was by the special direction of the Spirit of God that they assumed it. But I incline to the latter supposition; partly, because, in those happy days, it was the practice and the privilege of the disciples to ask, and to receive, direction from on high in almost every occurrence; but, chiefly, on account of the excellent instructions couched under this emphatical name, sufficient to direct and to animate those who were to be known by it, in their duty to each other, to God, and to the world. Some of these I propose to infer from the other proposition contained in the text, That the first name by which the followers of the gospel were generally known, was that of Christians.

Hitherto, as they were separated from the world, so they had been divided among themselves; and so strong were the prejudices subsisting between the members of the same body, that we find, in the beginning of this chapter, some of one party contended with the apostle Peter only for eating with those of another. Hence we read the phrases, "We of the Jews," "They of the Gentiles." But henceforward they are taught to blend and lose the greater distinction of Jew and Gentle, and the lesser divisions of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, in a denomination derived from him who alone was worthy to be their head, and who was equally "rich in mercy to all that call upon him" in every place.

And, as they thus were taught union and affection among themselves, so their relation to God, the way of their access to him, and their continual dependence upon him, were strongly implied in this name. A christian is the child of God by faith in Christ; he draws near to God in the name of Christ; he is led and supported by the spirit of Christ! Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, of the faith, hope, and love of every believer. From him alone every good desire proceeds: by him alone every good purpose is established: in him alone any of our best performances are acceptable. Let us beware (it is a necessary caution in these days) of a Christianity without Christ. I testify to you in plain words, that this is no better than a house without a foundation, a tree without a root, a body without a head, a hope without hope; a delusion, which, if persisted in, will end in irremediable destruction: "For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Christ Jesus:" he is the cornerstone, "chosen of God and precious." Alas for those who are offended with him in whom God is well pleased! but those who trust in him shall never be ashamed. This is another important lesson comprised in the word Christian.

Nor is this all: in the name of Christian they might, and we may, read the terms upon which we are to stand with the world. If I were asked what the words Platonist or Pythagorean signified, I should say they expressed certain persons who embraced the sentiments, submitted to the institutions, and imitated the conduct of Pythagoras and Plato; and, in order to describe them farther, I need do no more than give an account of the lives and writings of their respective masters. Could I thus, in some distant, unknown country, where the name of christianity had been only heard of, have an opportunity of declaring the history, the doctrines, and the laws of Jesus Christ; how he lived, how he taught, how he died, and upon what account; what usage he himself received from the world, and what he taught his followers to expect after he should leave them: if I should then describe the lives and the treatment of his most eminent servants, who lived immediately after him, and shew, "that as he was, so were they in the world" (1 John iv.); that pursuing his pattern, they found exactly the same opposition;—would not the inhabitants of such a country conclude, even as the scripture has assured us, that the temper of christianity, and the temper of the world, must be exactly opposite; and that, as it is said, "Whoever will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God" (James iv.), so, whoever had boldness to profess himself a friend of God, must necessarily be an enemy to the world; and would be sure to find the world, and all in it, at sworn enmity with him? But if I should farther tell them, that though the same laws, the same warnings, and the same examples, still subsist, yet that fierce opposition I have spoken of is at length nearly over, so that none are better pleased with the world, or more agreeable to it, than many of those who speak most honourably of the christian name: would not these people

immediatly infer, that one of these contending powers must have yielded to the triumphant genius of the other? that either the whole world were become such christians as those who were first styled so at Antioch, or that modern christians must be, for the most part, so only by profession, and have neither right nor pretence to their ancient spirit? And could we suppose farther, that after this information, some of these remote people were to land at Dover, and make the tour of this kingdom, can you think they would be long in determining which of these is indeed the case?

Numbers are deceived by restricting many passages in the New Testament to the times in which they were delivered, though it seems to have been the great care of the apostles to prevent, if possible, our making this mistake. St. John, having expressly said, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," immediately explains what he means by the world, namely, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. If high distinction, vain shew, and sensual pleasure, make no part of the world at this day, I must allow that we have no part in the apostle's decision, nor any cause to observe his caution; but if these things are as highly prized, as eagerly, and almost as universally pursued now in Britain as they were sixteen hundred years since at Rome and Antioch, surely we bear the name of Christians in vain; if our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, our comforts and our cares, are not very different from those of the generality among whom we live. "If any man," says St. Paul, "have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. Now, whatever more is meant by the phrase of having the spirit of Christ, it must certainly mean thus much at least, a disposition and turn of mind in some degree conformable to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, to be evidenced by a life and conversation suitable to his precepts and example: "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; he went about doing good," Heb. vii. He was gentle and compassionate, meek and patient under the greatest provocations; so active for the glory of God, that his zeal, by a strong and lively figure, is said to have eaten him up (John ii.); so affected with the worth of souls, that he wept over his bitterest enemies; so intent on his charitable designs towards men, that an opportunity of helping or instructing them was as meat and drink when he was hungry (John, iv.), and made him forget weariness and pain; so full of devotion towards God, that when the day had been wholly consumed in his labours of love, he would frequently redeem whole nights for prayer, Luke vi.

"I must stop.——No pen can describe, nor conceive, the life of the Son of God in the flesh: yet, in all these things he was our great exemplar; and no profession or appellation can benefit us, unless we are of those who copy closely and carefully after him. For thus saith the beloved apostle, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk even as he walked. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," 1 John ii.

I shall conclude with a short address to three sorts of persons. And, first, If there are any such here (would to God this part of my labour may prove needless!) I would recommend this subject to the consideration of those who have almost, if not altogether, cast off the honourable name into which they were baptized, who, trusting to what they call the light of nature, and the powers of human reason, venture to determine the fitness of things by their own standard, and declare in their words, as well as by their actions, "they will not have this man to rule over them," Luke, xix. Is not this an unaccountable event upon your plan, that the name which first went out from Antioch, under the greatest disadvantages, should so soon overspread the world, without arts or arms, without any force, or any motive of any external kind? Is it possible that any kind or degree of enthusiasm could influence, not a few, at one time, or in one place, but multitudes, of all ages, sexes, tempers, and circumstances, to embrace a profession which, in proportion to the strictness wherewith it was followed, was always attended with reproach and suffering? Those places which were most noted for opposition to this way, have been long since buried in the dust; but a succession of those whom the world counted "not worthy to live, and of whom the world was not worthy" (Acts xxv. Heb. xi.), has always subsisted, and still subsists. Had you lived in those days when Jesus Christ assured a company of poor disregarded fishermen, that neither the power nor the policy of the world, nor the gates of hell, should ever prevail against them (Matth. xvi.), you might have been less inexcusable in refusing to believe him. But now, when you have the accomplishment of this promise before your eyes, and well know (for you are book-read) what various attempts have been made, with what steadiness and formidable appearances they have been for a while carried on, to render these words vain, but how at length such attempts have totally failed, and ended in the confusion and ruin of those who engaged in them,—what tolerable reason can you assign for the part you act? Does the tendency of the gospel displease you? Is it an enemy to that virtue you are so fond of talking of? On the contrary, we are ready to put it to the proof, that here are not only the sublimest maxims of true virtue, but that the practice, or even the real love of virtue

are quite unattainable upon any other scheme, and that the most specious pretences, independent of this, are no more than great "swelling words of vanity," 2 Pet. ii. I speak the more freely upon this point, because I speak from experience. I was once as you are. I verily thought that I "ought to do" (or at least that I might do) "many things against Jesus of Nazareth," Acts xxvi. None even went farther than me, according to the limits of my years and capacity, in opposing the truths of the gospel. But the mercy of God spared me; and his providence having led me through various changes and circumstances of life, in each of which I have had a still deeper conviction of my former errors, has at length given me this opportunity to tell you, (O that I could speak it to your hearts!) "that at the name of Jesus every knee" (sooner or later) "must bow" (Phil. ii.); before him every heart must either bend or break; that he is full of mercy, love, and pardon, to all that submit themselves to him; but that, ere long, he shall be "revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to execute judgment, and to convince ungodly sinners of all the hard speeches they have spoken against him," Jude.

I would, 2dly, address those who, while they profess to believe in the Lord Jesus, do in their works manifestly deny him, Tit. i. This is, if possible, a worse case than the other, yet how frequent! You believe that Jesus Christ came into the world both to be a propitiation for sin and also to give us an example of a godly life, and yet continue contentedly in the practice of those sins for which he poured forth his soul, in the pursuit of those vices which the gospel disallows, and in the indulgence of those desires which your own consciences condemn. Think, I entreat you of these words in the 50th psalm; unto the wicked God saith, "What hast thou to do, that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth: seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?" This question is now proposed to our consciences, that we may be aware in time of the danger of insincerity, and not "perish with a lie in our right hands," Is. xliv. If we cannot answer it now, what shall we say in that awful hour when God shall speak in ten thousand thunders to all who, in this life, presumed to mock him with an empty outside worship? "drawing near him with their lips, when their hearts were far from him," Is. xxix. For the day is at hand, the day of the Lord, when God shall bring every hidden thing to light, when every man's works shall be tried and weighed; tried in the fire of his purity, weighed in the balance of his righteousness; and as the issue proves, so must the consequence abide to all eternity: a trial and a scrutiny which no flesh could abide, were it not for the interposing merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Judge. But he has already told us that he will then own none but those who were faithfully devoted to his service here. To the urgent cries and strongest pleas of others, he will give no other answer, but "I know you not, I never knew you," Matth. vii. "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire," Matth. xxv.——What will it then avail to plead our privileges, when, if this be all, we may read our doom already? "And that servant who knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more," Luke xii. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

Finally, let those who through grace have attained to worship God in spirit and in truth, be careful to adorn and hold fast their profession. You see your calling brethren: let the name of Christian always remind you of your high obligation to, and continual dependence upon, the author of your faith. Use it as a means to animate and regulate your whole behaviour. And if upon some occasions, you find undeserved ill offices, or unkind constructions, wonder not at it: thus it must and will be, more or less, to all who would exercise themselves in keeping a conscience void of offence, Acts xxiv. Yet be careful to model your actions by the rule of God's word. Our Lord says, "Blessed are ye when men revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," Matth. v. Observe, first, the evil spoken of you must be false and groundless; and, 2dly, the cause must be for the sake of Christ, and not for any singularities of your own, either in sentiment or practice, which you cannot clearly maintain from scripture. It is a great blessing when the innocence and simplicity of the dove is happily blended with true wisdom. It is a mercy to be kept from giving unnecessary offence, in these times of division and discord. Endeavour that a principle of love to God, and to mankind for his sake, may have place in all your actions: this will be a secret, seasonable, and infallible guide, in a thousand incidents, where particular rules cannot reach. "Be sober, be vigilant, continue instant in prayer;" and in a little while all your conflicts shall determine in conquest, faith shall give place to sight, and hope to possession. Yet a little while, and "Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (Col. iii.), to vindicate his truth, to put a final end to all evil and offence; and then we also, even all who have loved him, and waited for him, "shall appear with him in glory," Is. xxv

SERMON IV.

ON ALL THINGS BEING GIVEN US WITH CHRIST.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ROM. viii. 32

VARIOUS have been the disputes, and various the mistakes of men, concerning the things of God. Too often, amidst the heat of fierce contending parties, truth is injured by both sides, befriended by neither. Religion, the pretended cause of our many controversies, is sometimes wholly unconcerned in them: I mean, that pure religion and undefiled, that wisdom which cometh from above, abounds with proof of its divine original, being "pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality, and without hypocrisy," James iii. Religion is a serious and a personal concern. It arises from a right knowledge of God and ourselves; a sense of the great things he has done for fallen man; a persuasion, or at least a well-grounded hope, of our own interest in his favour; and a principle of unbounded love to him who thus first loved us. It consists in an entire surrender of ourselves, and our all to God; in setting him continually before us, as the object of our desires, the scope and inspector of our actions, and our only refuge and hope in every trouble: finally, in making the goodness of God to us the motive and model of our behaviour to our fellow-creatures, to love, pity, relieve, instruct, forbear, and forgive them, as occasions offer; because we ourselves both need and experience these things at the hand of our heavenly Father. The two great points to which it tends, and to which it urges the soul, where it has taken place, incessantly to press after, are, communion with God, and conformity to him: and as neither of these can be fully attained in this life, it teaches us to pant after a better; to withdraw our thoughts and affections from temporal things, and fix them on that eternal state, where we trust our desires shall be abundantly satisfied; and the work begun by grace shall be crowned with glory.

Such is the religion of the gospel. This the life and doctrine of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, jointly recommend. An excellent abridgement of the whole we have in this 8th chapter to the Romans, describing the state, temper, practice, privileges, and immoveable security of a true christian. Every verse is rich in comfort and instruction, and might, without violence, afford a theme for volumes; particularly that which I have read, may be styled *evangelium evangelii*: a complete and comprehensive epitome of whatever is truly worthy of our knowledge and our hope. The limits of our time are too narrow to admit any previous remarks on the context, or indeed to consider the subject according to the order of an exact division; therefore, I shall not at present use any artificial method; but, taking the words as they lie, I shall offer a few practical observations, which seem naturally and immediately to arise from the perusal of them, making such improvement as may occur as I go along. And may the Father of mercies, who has put this treasure into our hands, favour us with his gracious presence and blessing!

I. From the words, "He spared not his own Son," we may observe in one view, the wonderful goodness and the inflexible severity of God. So great was his goodness, that when man was by sin rendered incapable of any happiness, and obnoxious to all misery; incapable of restoring himself, or of receiving the least assistance from any power in heaven or in earth; God spared not his only-begotten Son, but in his unexampled love to the world, gave him, who alone was able to repair the breach. Every gift of God is good: the bounties of his common providence are very valuable: that he should continue life, and supply that life with food, raiment, and a variety of comforts, to those who by rebellion had forfeited all, was wonderful: but what are all inferior blessings, compared to this unspeakable gift of the Son of his love? Abraham had given many proofs of his love and obedience before he was commanded to offer up Isaac upon the altar; but God seems to pass by all that went before, as of small account in comparison of this last instance of duty: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me," Gen. xxii. Surely we likewise must say, "In this was manifested the love of God to us, because he gave his Son, his only Son, to be the life of the world." But all comparison fails. Abraham was bound in duty, bound by gratitude; neither was it a free-will offering, but by the express command of God: but to us the mercy was undesired, as well as undeserved. "Herein is love, not that we loved God;" on the contrary, we were enemies to him, and in rebellion against him; "but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," the sins we had committed against himself. My friends, ought not this love to meet a return? Is it not most desireable to be able to say with the apostle, upon good grounds, "We love him, because he first loved us?" Should it not be our continual inquiry, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" especially for this, which is both the crown and the spring of all the rest? Are we cold and unaffected at this astonishing proof of divine love, and are our hearts not grieved and humbled at our own ingratitude? then are we ungrateful and insensible indeed!

The justice and severity of God is no less

conspicuous than his goodness in these words: as he spared not to give his Son for our sakes, so, when Christ appeared in our nature, undertook our cause, and was charged with our sins, though he was the Father's well-beloved Son, he was not spared. He drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs: he bore all the shame, sorrow, and pain, all the distress of body and mind, that must otherwise have fallen upon our heads. His whole life, from the manger to the cross, was one series of humiliation and suffering, John xviii. Observe him in the world, despised, vilified, persecuted even to death, by unreasonable and wicked men; ridiculed, buffeted, spit upon; and at length nailed to the accursed tree! Consider him in the wilderness (Luke iv.), given up to the power and assaulted by the temptations of the devil! Behold him in the garden (Luke xxii.), and say, "Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger?" How inconceivable must that agony have been, which caused his blood to forsake its wonted channels, and start from every pore of his body! Behold him, lastly, upon the cross (Matth. xxvii.), suffering the most painful and ignominious death: suspended between two thieves; surrounded by cruel enemies, who made sport of his pangs; derided by all that passed by! Attend to his dolorous cry, expressive of an inward distress beyond all we have yet spoken of, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" St. Paul reminds the Galatians, that, by his preaching among them, Jesus Christ had "been evidently set forth crucified before their eyes," Gal. iii. Would it please God to bless my poor words to the like purpose, you would see a meaning you never yet observed in that awful passage, "Tribulation, and wrath, and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil" (Rom. ii.); for the punishment due to the sins of all that shall stand at the last day on the right hand of God, met and centered in Christ, the Lamb of expiation; nor was the dreadful weight removed, till he, triumphant in death, pronounced, "It is finished," John xix. Let us not think of this as a matter of speculation only; our lives, our precious souls, are concerned in it. Let us infer from hence, how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x. The apostle Peter (2 Peter ii.) admonishes those to whom he wrote, from the fearful example of the angels who sinned, and of the old world; where the same word is used as in my text, *ουκ εφεισατο*: "He spared them not:" that is, he punished them to the utmost; he did not afford them the least mitigation. It is a frequent figure of speech, by which much more is understood than is or can be expressed. Much more, then, may we say, if God spared not his own Son, "what shall be the end of those who obey not the gospel?" 1 Peter iv. If the holy Jesus was thus dealt with, when he was only accounted a sinner by imputation, where shall the impenitent and the ungodly appear? "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke xxiii. The punishment of sin in the soul in a future state is twofold: the wrath of God in all its dreadful effects, typified by fire unquenchable (Mark ix.), and the stings of conscience, represented by a worm that never dies. Our Lord endured the former; but the other perhaps could have no place in him, who was absolutely perfect and sinless. But if the prospect of one made him amazed and sorrowful beyond measure, what consternation must the concurrence of both raise in the wicked, when they shall hear and feel their irrevocable doom. May we have grace to reflect on these things, that we may flee for safety to the hope set before us, to Jesus Christ, the only, and the sure refuge from that approaching storm, which shall sweep away all the workers of iniquity as a flood, Isa. xxiii.

II. Here, as in a glass, we may see the evil of sin. The bitter fruits of sin are indeed visible every where. Sin is the cause of all the labour, sickness, pain, and grief, under which the whole creation groans. Sin often makes man a terror and a burden, both to himself and those about him. Sin occasions discord and confusion in families, cities, and kingdoms. Sin has always directed the march, and ensured the success, of those instruments of divine vengeance whom we style Mighty Conquerors. Those ravagers of mankind, who spread devastation and horror far and wide, and ruin more in a few days than ages can repair, have only afforded so many melancholy proofs of the malignity of sin. For this, a shower of flaming brimstone fell upon a whole country; for this, an overwhelming deluge destroyed a whole world; for this, principalities and powers were cast from heaven, and are reserved under chains of darkness (2 Peter ii.) to a more dreadful doom. But none of these things, nor all of them together, afford such a conviction of the heinous nature, and destructive effects of sin, as we may gather from these words, "He spared not his own Son."

III. Here we may likewise see the value of the human soul. We ordinarily judge of the worth of a thing by the price which a wise man, who is acquainted with its intrinsic excellency, is willing to give for it. Now, the soul of a man was of such estimation in the sight of God, who made it, that, when it was sinking into endless ruin, he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for our ransom. Two things especially render the soul thus important in the view of infinite wisdom: 1st, The capacity he had given it: for "he formed it for himself" (Isa. xliii.), capable of knowing, serving, and enjoying God; and by consequence, incapable of happiness in any thing beneath him; for nothing

can satisfy any being but the attainment of its proper end: and, 2dly, The duration he had assigned it beyond the limits of time, and the existence of the material world. The most excellent and exalted being, if only the creature of a day, would be worthy of little regard.* On the other hand, immortality itself would be of small value to a creature that could rise no higher than the pursuits of animal life: But in the soul of man, the capability of complete happiness or exquisite misery, and that for ever, makes it a prize worthy the contention of different worlds. For this an open intercourse was maintained between heaven and earth, till at length the Word of God appeared "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that, in our nature, he might encounter and subdue the sworn enemy of our species. All that has been transacted in the kingdoms of providence and grace, from the beginning of the world, has been in subserviency to this grand point, the redemption of the deathless soul. And is it so? And shall there be found amongst us numbers utterly insensible of their natural dignity, that dare disparage the plan of infinite wisdom, and stake those souls for trifles, which nothing less than the blood of Christ could redeem! There is need to use great plainness of speech; the matter is of the utmost weight; be not, therefore, offended that I would warn you against the deceitfulness of sin. Suffer not your hearts to be entangled in the vanities of the world: either they will fail, and disappoint you in life, or at least you must leave them behind you when you die. You must enter an invisible, unknown state, where you cannot expect to meet any of those amusements or engagements which you here find so necessary to pass away the tedious load of time that hangs upon your hands. You, to whom a few hours of leisure are so burdensome, have you considered how you shall be able to support an eternity? You stand upon a brink, and all about you is uncertainty. You see, of your acquaintance, some or other daily called away, some who were as likely to live as yourselves. You know not but you may be the very next. You cannot be certain but this very night your soul may be required of you, Luke, xii. Perhaps a few hours may introduce you into the presence of that God whom you have been so little desirous to please. And can you, in such a situation, sport and play, with as little concern as the lamb, already marked out to bleed to-morrow? Oh! it is strange! How fatally has the god of this world blinded your eyes! and how dreadful must your situation be in death, if death alone can undeceive you!

IV. Lastly, we may gather from these words the certainty of the gospel-salvation. God himself delivered up his Son for us all. He declared himself well pleased with him (Matth. iii.) as our Surety, upon his first entrance upon his work; and testified his acceptance of his undertaking, in that he raised him from the dead, and received him into heaven as our Advocate. Now, "if God himself be thus for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. If he who only has a right to judge us, is pleased to justify us, "who can lay any thing to our charge? If Christ who died" for our sins, and is risen on our behalf, has engaged to "intercede for us, who shall condemn?" "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Nor is this all; but every thing we stand in need of is fully provided; and we may well argue, as the apostle has taught us elsewhere, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. v.): or, as in the passage before us, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," when we were alienated from him, "how shall he not with him freely give us all things," now he has taught us to pray, and given us his own promises to plead for all we ask?—This brings me to the second clause of the text; only it may be proper, before I enter upon it, to subjoin two cautions, to prevent mistakes from what has been already said.

1st, Let us remember that all is a free gift. He gave his Son: he gives all things with him. The gospel allows no place for merit of our own in any respect, there was no moving cause in us, unless our misery may be deemed such. Our deliverance, in its rise, progress, and accomplishment, must be ascribed to grace alone; and he that would glory, must glory only in the Lord, 1 Cor. i.

2dly, Let us observe the apostle's phrase. He says not absolutely for all, but for us all; that is, those who are described in the former part of the chapter, "who are led by the Spirit of God, who walk not after the flesh, who are delivered from the bondage of corruption," who have liberty to call God "Abba, father," and prove their relation by following him as "dear children." Christ is "the author of eternal salvation to those only who obey him," Heb. v. It cannot be otherwise, since a branch of that salvation is to deliver us "from our sins," and "the present evil world" (Gal. i.); to "purify us from dead works, to serve the living God." "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall," notwithstanding all that Christ has done or suffered, yea so much the rather, "of the flesh reap corruption," Gal. vi.

The text having declared, that God spared not his Son for our sakes, proceeds to infer that "with him he will assuredly give us all things." Here we may take notice, first, that the words *all things* must be limited to such

* Vide Young's Night Thoughts, 7th Night.

as are needful and good for us. It may be said of many of our desires, "ye know not what ye ask" (Matth. xx.): in such cases, the best answer we can receive is a denial. For those blessings which God has promised absolutely to give, such as pardon, grace, and eternal life, we cannot be too earnest or explicit in our prayers; but in temporal things we should be careful to ask nothing but with submission to the divine will. The promises, it is true, appertain to "the life that now is, as well as that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are ours, if we are Christ's," 1 Cor. iii. But the particular *modus* of these things God has reserved in his own hands, to bestow them as best shall suit our various tempers, abilities, and occasions. And it is well for us that it is so; for we should soon ruin ourselves if left to our own choice: like children who are fond to meddle with what would hurt them, but refuse the most salutary medicines, if unpalatable; so we often pursue, with earnestness and anxiety, those things, which, if we could obtain them, would greatly harm, if not destroy us. Often, too, with a rash and blind impatience, we struggle to avoid or escape those difficulties which God sees fit to appoint for the most gracious and merciful purposes,—to correct our pride and vanity, to exercise and strengthen our faith, to wean us from the world, to teach us a closer dependence upon himself, and to awaken our desires after a better inheritance.

Again, as God, by his promise freely to give us all things, has not engaged to comply with the measure of our unreasonable, short-sighted wishes: so neither has he confined himself as to the time or manner of bestowing his gifts. The blessing we seek, though perhaps not wholly improper, may be at present unseasonable; in this case, the Lord will suspend it, till he sees it will afford us the comfort and satisfaction he intends us by it: and then we shall be sure to have it. Sometimes it is with-held, to stir us up to fervency and importunity in our prayers, sometimes to make it doubly welcome and valuable when it comes. So likewise as to the manner: we ask one good thing, and he gives an equivalent in something else; and when we come to weigh all things, we see cause to say his choice as best. Thus David acknowledges: "In e day that I called, thou didst answer me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," Psal. cxxxviii. David asked for deliverance from trouble; the Lord gave him strength to bear it; and he allows his prayer as fully answered. A parallel case the apostle records: he besought the Lord thrice (2 Cor. xii.) for the removal of that trial which he calls "a thorn in the flesh:" the answer he received was, "My grace is sufficient for thee.' Such an assurance was more valuable than the deliverance he sought could be. Sometimes we seek a thing in a way of our own, by means and instruments of our own devising. God crosses our feeble purposes, that he may give us the pleasure of receiving it immediately from himself. It were easy to enlarge on this head; let it suffice to know, our concerns are in his hands who does all things well; and who will, and does, appoint all to work together for our good.

From the latter clause, thus limited and explained, many useful directions might be drawn. I shall only mention two or three, and conclude.

1st, Since we are told, that God freely gives us all things, let us learn to see and acknowledge his hand in all we have, and in all we meet with. When Jacob was returning to Canaan after a long absence (Gen. xxxii.), the fear of his brother Esau occasioned him to divide his family and substance into separate companies; and, comparing his present situation with the poor condition in which he had been driven from home twenty years before, he breaks out into this act of praise: "I am not worthy, O Lord, of all thy mercies; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands!" How pious and how cheering was this reflection! And afterwards (Gen. xxxiii.), when his brother Esau asked him concerning his sons, "They are the children (said he), which God has graciously given thy servant." Such a deep and abiding persuasion of the most high God ordering and over-ruling all our concerns, would, like the light, diffuse a lustre and a beauty upon every thing around us. To consider every comfort of life as an effect and proof of the divine favour towards us, would, like the feigned alchymist's stone, turn all our possessions into gold, and stamp a value upon things which a common eye might judge indifferent. Nor is this more than the truth: "The hairs of our head are all numbered," Matth. x. The eye of divine providence is upon every sparrow of the field; nor can we properly term any circumstance of our lives small, since such as seem most trifling in themselves do often give birth to those which we judge most important. On the other hand, to be able to discover the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father through the darkest cloud of troubles and afflictions, to see all our trials appointed to us, in number, weight, and measure; nothing befalling us by chance, nothing without need, nothing without a support, nothing without a designed advantage;—what a stay must these apprehensions be to the soul! Take away these, and man is the most forlorn, helpless, miserable object in the world; pining for every thing he has not, trembling for every thing he has; equally suffering under the pressure of what does happen, and the fear of what may: liable to thousands of unsuspected dangers, yet unable to guard

against those which are most obvious. Were there no future life, it would be our interest to be truly and uniformly religious, in order to make the most of this. How unhappy must they be, to whom the thoughts of a God ever-present is a burden they strive, in vain, to shake off! But let us learn to acknowledge him in all our ways, and then he will direct and bless our paths, Prov. iii.

2d, Since all we have is the gift of God, let this teach us, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content. Our heavenly Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask him, Matth. vi. The earth is his, and the fulness thereof (Psal. xxiv.); and his goodness is equal to his power, a proof of which we have in the text. He has already given us more than ten thousand worlds. Are you poor? Be satisfied with the Lord's appointment. It were as easy to him to give you large estates as to supply you with the bread you eat, or to continue your breath in your nostrils: but he sees poverty best for you; he sees prosperity might prove your ruin; therefore he has appointed you the honour of being in this respect conformable to your Lord, who when on earth had not where to lay his head, Matth. viii. Have any of you lost a dear friend or relative, in whose life you thought your own lives bound up? Be still, and know that he is God, Psal. xlvi. It was he who gave you that friend; his blessing made your friend a comfort to you; and though the stream is now cut off, the fountain is still full. Be not like a wild bull in a net; the Lord has many ways to turn your mourning into joy. Are any of you sick? Think how the compassionate Jesus healed diseases with a word, in the days of his flesh. Has he not the same power now as then? Has he not the same love? Has he, in his exalted state, forgot his poor languishing members here below? No, verily: he still retains his sympathy; he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities; he knows our frame; he remembers we are but dust, Psal. ciii. It is because sickness is better for you than health, that he thus visits you. He dealt in the same manner with Lazarus, whom he loved, John xi. Resign yourselves, therefore to his wisdom, and repose in his love. There is a land where the blessed inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick" (Isa. xxxiii.); and there all that love the Lord Jesus shall shortly be. Are any of you tempted? "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him," James, i. Sure, you need no other argument to be content, shall I say, or to rejoice and be exceeding glad? "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. Be it in poverty or losses, in body or mind, in your own person or another's it is all appointed by God, and shall issue in your great benefit, if you are of the number of those that love him.

3d, Once more, since it is said that all things are freely given us in and together with Christ, let us "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i.); to know that we have an interest in him and his mediation; and then (if I may borrow a common expression) we are made for ever. The Lord Jesus Christ, sent from God on a merciful errand to a lost world, did not come empty: no; he is fraught with all blessings, suitable to all persons, extending to all times, enduring to all eternity. O make it your great care to know him and to please him; study his word, call upon his name, frequent his ordinances, observe his sayings, seek to know him as the only way to God (John, xiv.); the way to pardon, peace, and divine communion here, and to complete happiness hereafter. When once you can say, "My Beloved is mine" (Song ii.), I account all his interest my own; "and I am his," I have given myself up to him without reserve,—you will, you must be happy. You will be interested in all his attributes and communicable perfections. His wisdom will be your high tower, his providence your constant shield, his love your continual solace. "He will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways," Psal. xci. In times of difficulty he will direct your counsels; in times of danger he will fill you with comfort and "keep you in perfect peace" (Isa. xxvi.), when others quake for fear. He will bless your basket and your store, your substance and your families: your days shall happily pass in doing your Father's will, and receiving renewed tokens of his favour; and at night you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet. When afflictions befal you (for these likewise are the fruits of love), you shall see your God near at hand, "a very present help in trouble (Psal. xlvi.); you shall find your strength increased in proportion to your trial; you shall in due time be restored, as gold from the furnace, purified sevenfold, to praise your great deliverer. Every thing you meet in life shall yield you profit; and death, which puts a fatal period to the hope of the wicked; death, at whose name thousands turn pale, shall to you be an entrance into a new and endless life. He who tasted death for you (Heb. ii.), and sanctified it to you, shall lead and support you through that dark valley: you shall shut your eyes upon the thing of time, to open them the next moment in the blissful presence of your reconciled God. You that a minute before were surrounded by weeping, helpless friends, shall, in an instant, be transported and inspired to join the glorious song, "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us priests and kings to God

and his Father; to him be glory and strength for ever and ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. Thus "blessed shall the man be that fears the Lord," Psal. cxviii. "Thus shall it be done to him whom the King delighteth to honour," Esth. vi. Amen.

SERMON V.

ON SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. JOHN v. 39

THE phrase in the Greek is ambiguous, and may be either rendered, according to our reading, as a command, *search the scriptures*; or else as simply affirming, *ye do search the scriptures*. And as the words were spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were exceedingly studious in the letter of the scriptures, this may perhaps have been their first design. The difference is not material; and either sense will afford us instruction. If we receive it as a command, we should consider it as given by the Lord himself, whose disciples we profess to be, as bound on us by our own acknowledgement, since in them we think and say we have eternal life; and as absolutely necessary to be complied with, since it is these, and these only, which testify of Christ, in the knowledge of whom our eternal life consists. If we should understand it in the latter sense, as spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees, it may give us a useful caution not to lay too much stress either on what we think or on what we do. For these persons, we find, had in some espects a right sentiment of the holy scriptures: they believed that in them there was eternal life; and, in a sense likewise, they made this an inducement to read, yea, to search them. But though they thus thought and thus acted, and though the scriptures, from the first page to the last, do testify of Christ, yet they could not understand or receive this testimony, but rejected the Messiah whom they professed to hope for, and took all their pains in searching the scriptures to no purpose.

In what I am about to lay before you, I oppose the following order: 1st, To mention a few requisites, without which it is impossible rightly to understand the scriptures: 2d, To shew how the scriptures testify of Christ: 3d, To consider what the import of their testimony is: 4th, To press the practice of searching the scriptures, from the argument used in the text, which is equally applicable to us to the Jews of old, that in them we think we have eternal life.

I. The first requisite I shall mention is *Sincerity*; I mean a real desire to be instructed by the scriptures, and to submit both our sentiments and our practices to be controuled and directed by what we read there. Without this, our reading and searching will only issue in our greater condemnation, and bring us under the heavy doom of the servant that knew his master's will and did it not. A remarkable instance of this we have in the 42d and two following chapters of Jeremiah. After the destruction of Jerusalem, and the death of Gedaliah, the people that were left intreated the prophet to inquire of the Lord for them, concerning their intended removal into Egypt. Their request was fair: "That the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." Their engagement was very solemn: "The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee." But their hypocrisy was most detestable. The Lord, who seeth the inmost purposes of the soul, could not be put off with their fair pretences. He sent them in answer an express prohibition to go into Egypt; assuring them that his curse should follow them, and that there they should certainly perish. Yet they went, and verified what the prophet had told them: "For ye dissembled in your hearts, when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it." Then they spoke out, and like themselves, when they told him, "As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us, in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but we will certainly do whatever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." None of us dare speak thus in express terms; but if we bring our preconceived opinions or purposes, not in order to examine them strictly by the test of scripture, but to find or wrest some passages in the word of God to countenance or justify ourselves; if our desire is not simply to be led in the very way of God's commandments; if we are not really willing to discover every error and evil that may be in us, in order to forsake them,—we closely imitate these deceitful, obstinate, insolent Jews, be our pretences ever so fair, and are liable to the like dreadful judgment for our hypocrisy; the curse of God upon our devices here, and the portion of his enemies hereafter.

Where this sincerity is wanting, every thing is wrong; neither praying, nor hearing, nor reading, can profit. The scriptures abound with the severest threatenings against those who presume to mock the all-seeing God. I shall only produce one passage, from Ezekiel

xiv. 5. "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of iniquity before their faces: should I be inquired of at all by them?—Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols." I say not this, that I would have any one throw aside the ordinances of God, especially his public worship. These are the means which God has appointed, in which he has commanded us to wait, and where he is often pleased to be found, even by those who seek him not. But I would intreat such persons seriously to consider the dreadful condition they would be in, if death should surprise them in such a state of insincerity as renders their very prayers and sacrifices "an abomination to the Lord," and perverts those things which are designed for their advantage into an occasion of their falling.

A second thing necessary is *Diligence*. This, with the former, is finely described in the book of Proverbs. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandment within thee; so that thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. The wisdom of God, in which we are concerned, is contained in his word. The best understanding is to keep his commandments (Psal. cxi.): but as we cannot keep them unless we know them, neither can we know them without a diligent inquiry. The word which is rendered *search*, ἐρευνᾶτε, is borrowed from the practice of miners: it implies two things, to dig, and to examine. First, with much labour they pierce the earth to a considerable depth; and when they have thus found a vein of precious ore, they then break and sift it, and suffer no part to escape their notice. Thus must we join frequent assiduous reading, with a close and awakened meditation; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, carefully taking notice of the circumstances, occasion, and application of what we read; being assured, that there is a treasure of truth and happiness under our hands, if we have but skill to discover and improve it. Only let us be mindful that we have the same views in reading the scriptures, that God has in revealing them to us, which the apostle thus enumerates:—"All scripture," or the whole scripture, πᾶσα γραφὴ, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." 2 Tim. iii. And elsewhere it is said to be able to make us "wise unto salvation." How absurd would it be for a man to read a treatise of husbandry with a design of learning navigation, or to seek the principles of trade and commerce in an essay on music? No less absurd is it to read or study the scriptures with any other view than to receive its doctrines, submit to its reproofs, and obey its precepts, that we may be made "wise unto salvation." All disquisitions and criticisms that stop short of this, that do not amend the heart, as well as furnish the head, are empty and dangerous, at least to ourselves, whatever use they may be of to others. An experience of this caused a learned critic and eminent commentator (Grotius), to confess, towards the close of his life, *Ah! vitam prorsus perdidi, laboriose nihil agendo!* "Alas! I have wasted my life in much labour to no purpose!" But, on the contrary, when we are diligent and studious, that we may be better acquainted with the divine precepts and promises, and better inclined to observe and trust them, then we may hope for happy success; for, "blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein day and night: for he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in due season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth under this influence "shall prosper," Psal. i. Thus God has promised, and thus many have found it, and been enabled to adopt the words of David, "Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me: I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation," Psal. cxix.

Humility is a third thing very necessary to a profitable perusal of the scriptures. "God giveth his grace to the humble," James iv. "He will guide the meek in judgment, he will enlighten the simple in his way," Psal. xxv. The proud he resisteth, ἀντιτάσσεται, he draws up against him; he prepares himself, as it were, with his whole force to oppose his progress. A most formidable expression! If God only leaves us to ourselves, we are all ignorance and darkness; and what must be the dreadful case of those against whom he appears in arms? This has been a principal source of those various and opposite heresies and mistakes, which are the reproach of our holy profession, that vain man, though born a mere "wild ass's colt" (Job, xi.), has undertaken, by his own strength and wisdom to decide authoritatively on the meaning o scripture, without being aware of the ignorance, prejudice, and weakness which influence his judgment in religious matters, without knowing the utter inability of the natural man to discern the things of God, and without attending to those means the scriptur themselves have appointed for the redress these evils. But would we not lose our tir

and pains; would we wish not to be misled ourselves, or not to mislead others? Let us aim at a humble spirit: let us reflect much on the majesty and grandeur of the God we serve: let us adore his condescension in favouring us with a revelation of his will: let us learn to consider the word of God, and the wisdom of God, as terms of the same import: in a word, let us study to know ourselves, our sinfulness and ignorance; then we shall no longer read the scriptures with indifference or prepossession, but with the greatest reverence and attention, and with the most enlarged expectation.

I shall mention but one thing more upon this head, which is as necessary in itself as any of the preceding, and likewise necessary in order to obtain them, and that is *Prayer*. Sincerity, diligence, and humility, are the gifts of God; the blessing we seek in the exercise of them is in his hand; and he has promised to bestow all good things, even "his Holy Spirit, upon those who ask him." Prayer is indeed the best half of our business while upon earth, and that which gives spirit and efficacy to all the rest. Prayer is not only our immediate duty, but the highest dignity, the richest privilege we are capable of receiving on this side eternity; and the neglect of it implies the deepest guilt, and includes the heaviest punishment. A stranger to prayer, is equally a stranger to God and to happiness, "like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed," James, i. Are any of you, my friends, unacquainted with prayer? Then are you without God in the world, without a guide in prosperity, without resource in distress, without true comfort in life, and while you continue so, without hope in death. But, especially, you are utterly unqualified to search the scriptures. There is a veil upon the mind and heart of every man (as the apostle assures us, 2 Cor. iii.), so that he can neither see nor embrace heavenly truths, till this impediment is removed:—the means of this is prayer. Therefore David says, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psal. cxix.). He knew there were wonderful things contained in the law, but confesses himself incapable of discerning them till the Lord should interpose. This he has promised to do in behalf of all who call upon him. But those who seek not assistance from God, can find it no where else: "for every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," who hath said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," James i. A critical knowledge of the original languages, a skill in the customs and manners of the ancients, an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman classics, a perusal of councils, fathers, scholiasts, and commentators, a readiness in the subtleties of logical disputation;—these, in their proper place and subserviency, may be of considerable use to clear, illustrate, or enforce the doctrines of scripture: but unless they are governed by a temper of humility and prayer; unless the man that possesses them accounts them altogether as nothing, without that assistance of the Spirit of God which is promised to guide believers into all truth; unless he seeks and prays for this guidance no less earnestly than those who understand nothing but their mother-tongue; I make no scruple to affirm, that all his apparatus of knowledge only tends to lead him so much the farther astray; and that a plain honest ploughman, who reads no book but his Bible, and has no teacher but the God to whom he prays in secret, stands abundantly fairer for the attainment of true skill in divinity. But happy he, who by faith and prayer can realize the divine presence always with him! who is sincere in his intentions, diligent in the use of means, diffident of himself, yet full of trust and hope, that God, whom he desires to serve, will lead and guide him in the paths of peace and righteousness for his mercies sake, Psal. xxxi. Those things which are necessary for him to know, shall be made so plain, that he shall not mistake them; and those things with which he is not so immediately concerned, shall at least teach him humility; teach him to adore the depths of divine wisdom, and to long for that happy hour, when all that is imperfect shall be done away; when we shall no more see in part, but shall know even as we are known, 1 Cor. xiii.

II. I proceed to the second thing proposed: To shew how the scriptures testify of Christ. In general, it may be said, that he is the main design and subject, both of the whole scripture, and of each particular book. This will be easily allowed of the New Testament, but it is not so obvious with regard to several parts of the Old: I hope, therefore, it will not be unacceptable to those who love the word of God, if I consider this point something at large, and help them to discover the Lord Jesus Christ in almost every page of the Bible. This will be a new inducement to them to search the scriptures, when they shall perceive that many passages which they were accustomed to read with indifference, as hardly able to discern any wisdom or meaning in them, do directly testify of Christ.

What is expressed in the Old Testament (for of this I am now to speak) concerning Christ, may be reduced to three heads,—prophecies, types, and ceremonies. To open and trace these in their proper extent, would require volumes; but it is only a hint of each that the bounds of our present meeting will permit me to offer.

The first glimmering of light which dawned upon a lost world was that promise (for I consider the promises as a branch of prophecy) which God (who, in the midst of judgment, remembers mercy) made to the woman, that

her seed should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. This was absolute and general, giving hopes of a recovery, but no information of person, time, or place: but the path of this just one was as the light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day, Prov. iv. In the time of Noah, the hope and desire of all nations was restrained to the line of Shem (Gen. ix.), and afterwards more expressly to the family of Abraham: when this divided into two branches, God, to shew that his purpose is of himself, and that he will do as pleaseth him with his own, set aside the elder, and confirmed to Jacob, the younger, "that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed," Gen. xxviii. Jacob had twelve sons, which made a still more explicit restriction necessary. Accordingly, the patriarch, before his death, declared that this high privilege, of perpetuating the line of the Messiah, was fixed in the tribe of Judah (Gen. xlix.), and the time of his advent was obscurely marked out, by the promise "that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till the Shiloh came." The last personal limitation was to David (1 Chron. xvii.) that of his family God would raise up the King, who should reign for ever, and over all. Succeeding prophets gradually foretold the time, place, and circumstances of his birth, the actions of his life, the tenor of his doctrine, the success he met with, and the cause, design, and manner of his sufferings and death; in short, to almost every thing that we read in the gospel, we may annex the observation that the evangelists have made upon a few instances (in order, as it may be presumed, to direct us in searching out the rest), "then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophets.' From them we learn, that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, in Bethlehem of Judah, four hundred and ninety years after the commandment given to rebuild Jerusalem; that he should begin his ministry in Galilee; that he should be despised and rejected of men, betrayed by one of his disciples, sold for thirty pieces of silver, with which money the potters field should be afterwards purchased! "that he should be cut off, but not for himself;" and that his death should be followed by the sudden and total ruin of the Jewish government. To compare these promises and prophecies, among themselves, and with their exact accomplishment recorded in the New Testament,—this alone would engage us in a close and profitable search into the scriptures, and would afford us the most convincing proofs of their divine original and excellence.

The types of Christ in the Old Testament may be considered as two-fold, personal and relative. The former describing under the vail of history, his character and offices as considered in himself; the latter teaching under a variety of metaphors, the advantages those who believe in him should receive from him. Thus Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Sampson, David, Solomon and others, were in different respects types or figures of Christ. Some more immediately represented his person; others prefigured his humiliation; others referred to his exaltation, dominion, and glory. So, in the latter sense, the ark of Noah, the rainbow, the manna, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, were so many emblems pointing out the nature, necessity, means, and security of that salvation which the Messiah was to establish for his people. Nor are these fanciful allusions of our own making, but warranted and taught in scripture, and easily proved from thence, would time permit; for indeed, there is not one of these persons or things which I have named, but would furnish matter for a long discourse, if closely considered in this view, as typical of the promised Redeemer.

The like may be said of the Levitical ceremonies. The law of Moses is, in this sense, a happy schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ (Gal. iii.): and it may be proved beyond contradiction, that in these the gospel was preached of old to all those Israelites indeed, whose hearts were right with God, and whose understandings were enlightened by his Spirit. The ark of the covenant, the mercy-seat, the tabernacle, the incense, the altar, the offerings, the high-priest with his ornaments and garments, the laws relating to the leprosy, the Nazarite, and the redemption of lands;—all these, and many more, which I have not time to mention, have a deep and important meaning beyond their outward appearance; each, in their place, pointed to the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world (John i.), derived their efficacy from him, and received their full accomplishment in him.

Thus the Old and New Testaments do mutually illustrate each other; nor can either be well understood singly. The Old Testament, in histories, types, prophecies, and ceremonies, strongly delineates him, who, in the fulness of time, was to come into the world to effect a reconciliation between God and man. The New Testament shews that all these characters and circumstances were actually fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; and that it was he of whom "Moses in the law, and the prophets did write;" and that we are not to look for another.

We read in Genesis (chap. xxi.), that Abraham had two sons,—Isaac, the child of the promise, the son of his old age, by his wife Sarah,—and Ishmael, born some years before, of Hagar, the handmaid and servant of Sarah; and that the latter, with his mother, were cast out of the family. The occasion some would think trivial, namely, the anger and jealousy of Sarah, because Ishmael had mocked her son; but when it was grievous to

Abraham to put them away upon so slight a ground, God himself interposed and commanded him to comply with her desire. Had we heard no more of this, it is likely we should have considered it as a piece of family-history, of no very great importance but to those who were immediately concerned in it. We should perhaps have wondered to find so much said upon such a subject, in a book which we profess to believe was written by divine inspiration; we should probably have presumed to arraign the divine wisdom, in descending to particulars, in which, according to our views of the fitness of things, we could discern nothing either interesting or instructive. To guard us from these rash mistakes, to explain the true meaning of this particular transaction, and at the same time to furnish us with a key for understanding many passages of the like nature, in which human wisdom can discover neither beauty nor benefit,—it has pleased God to favour us with an infallible exposition of the whole matter. Not for the sake of Abraham, or Isaac, or Ishmael, or Hagar, was this recorded; much less merely to gratify our curiosity. No: "These things," saith the apostle Paul, "are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sina, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sina in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.—Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free," Gal. iv. I must not detain you by shewing at large how the apostle teaches us to discover the spirit and privileges of the gospel, together with what all who truly receive it must expect to encounter, in a passage which we might otherwise have thought superfluous, if not impertinent. Keep this in your mind when you read the scriptures. Assure yourselves, that there is nothing vain or useless in the word of God. Compare one place with another, the law with the gospel, the prophets with the evangelists; pray unto God that he would open your understandings to understand the scriptures, as he did for the disciples (Luke xxiv.); and in a little time you will find, that Christ is not only spoken of in a few verses, here and there, but that, as I said before, he is the main scope and subject of every book, and almost of every chapter.

I would add an instance or two of the meaning of the ceremonies, to what I have observed of Hagar in reference to the types. In the law of the Passover, it was especially enjoined (Exod. xii.), that not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken. Now, who would have thought that this referred to Christ! yet we see the evangelist expressly applies it to him, and is filled with wonder at the accomplishment. The legs of those who were crucified at the same time were purposely broken (John xix.), but our Lord was passed by; and that it should be so, was intimated near fifteen hundred years before, in this charge concerning the lamb. Again, we find, that in several places where a bullock was commanded to be slain for a sin-offering, it was enjoined, that the flesh and the skin should be burnt without the camp; and from the epistle to the Hebrews (chap. xiii.), we learn, that this was not a slight or arbitrary circumstance. We have there this explication: "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary, by the high-priest, for sin, were burnt without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach." I must not enlarge any farther, or it were easy, by the clue the apostles in their writings have given us, to trace the important meaning of many of those institutions, which scoffers, who are wise in their own conceits, though neither acquainted with themselves nor the subject, presume to censure as frivolous. The sense of the sacred writings lies too deep for a captious, superficial, volatile survey; it must be a search, a scrutiny; a humble, diligent, sincere, and persevering inquiry, or no satisfaction can be expected.

The import of the scripture-testimony concerning Christ, which was the third thing I proposed to speak of, must be deferred to another opportunity. I hope what has been already said, may, through the divine blessing, engage you to search the scriptures. Remember it is the command of our Lord Jesus Christ: it is the only appointed way to the knowledge of him, whom to know, so as to love, serve, and obey him, is both the foundation and the sum of our happiness, here and hereafter. We, as well as the Jews, think we have eternal life in the scriptures, and shall, like them, be inexcuseable and self-condemned if we neglect it. Let us not be like fools, with a prize, an inestimable prize, in our hands, but without heart or skill to use it. Better would it have been for us to have lived and died in the wilds of America, without either means of grace or hopes of glory, than to slight this record which God has been pleased to give us of his Son. But happy the man whose delight is in the law of his God! He has sure direction in every difficulty, certain comfort in every distress. The beauty of the precepts is preferable in his eye to

"thousands of gold and silver," Psal. cxix. The comforts of the promises are sweeter to his taste, "than honey or the honey-comb," Psal. xix. He is happy in life; for the word of God is to him as a "fountain of living water." He shall be happy in death; the promises of his God shall support him through that dark valley; and he shall be happy for ever in the presence and love of him for whose sake he now searches the scriptures; "Whom, having not seen," yet, from the testimony there given of him, "he loves; in whom, though now he sees him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i.

Plerasque autem (si detur liberè loquendi venia) quæ etiam in Theologicis scholis tractantur, et magno cum apparatu et strepitu docentur et disputantur, spinosum fortè acumen habent, sed simul certè spinosum sterilitatem: lacerare et pungere possunt, animos pascere non possunt: "Nemo enim ex spinis uvas colligit unquam, aut ex tribulis ficus." "Quorsum alta (inquit quidam) de Trinitate disputare, si careas humilitate, et sic Trinitati displiceas?" Et aptè S. Augustinus ad illud Esaiæ, "Ego Deus tuus docens te utilia;" "*utilia* (inquit) docens, non *subtilia*." Et hoc est quod opto et oro; ut nobis pro modulo nostro subdocentibus, ille efficaciter vos perdoceat, qui cathedram in cœlo habens, corda docet in terris.

ARCHIEP. LEIGHTON, *Prælect. Theol. pag. 4. edit. 4to. Lond.* 1693.

SERMON VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. JOHN v. 39.

IN a former discourse on these words, I mentioned four things as highly requisite, if we would acquire an useful knowledge of the scriptures,—sincerity with respect to the end, diligence in the use of means, a humble sense of our own weakness, and earnest prayer to God for the assistance of his grace and Spirit. To engage us to this practice, and perseverance therein, I next considered how the scriptures when properly searched into and compared, do clearly, and in every part, testify of Christ, that he is the end of the law, the sum of the prophets, the completion of the promises, the scope of the types and ceremonies, and the great object of the whole Old-Testament dispensation. I am now to say something to the third point I proposed.

III. Concerning the import of the testimony which the scriptures bear to Christ.

The principal difficulties on this head are, where to begin on a subject absolutely boundless, and what to select that may be most suitable and useful to this assembly, from the immense variety of topics that offer. For this being the great end and design of the scriptures, to proclaim the excellency of Christ Jesus our Lord, "that we, through him, may have strong consolation" (Heb. xii.), it is inculcated in so many places, set in such a diversity of views, and couched under such deep and comprehensive expressions, that not only our present opportunity, but my whole future life, would be too short, if I would collect, state, and explain all that properly belongs to this single article. For order's sake, I shall reduce the little I must say at this time to three or four distinct particulars,—what the scriptures testify of Christ, as to his person, his offices, his power, and his love.

When we hear of some great undertaking to be performed, we inquire of course about the person who is chiefly concerned in it; so, when we are told of the mighty works Jesus Christ engaged to perform, to redeem a lost world, to satisfy divine justice, to make an end of sin, to abolish death, and to bring life and immortality to light; the first question that occurs is, Who is he? Search the scriptures, and you will have a clear and decisive answer. The prophet Isaiah, "rapt into future times," describes him thus: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Isaiah ix. 6. The union of the divine and human natures in the Messiah is so strongly asserted, the names and attributes of God are so clearly ascribed, in this passage to one who should be born into the world, that he who runs may read; the way-faring man, though a fool, must understand it; and it requires a considerable share of unhappy ingenuity, to wrest the words to any other than their obvious meaning. This text, though it stood alone in the Bible (supposing the scriptures to be a revalation from God), would be a full warrant, and a firm foundation, for that great point of christian faith and doctrine, That Jesus Christ is very God, and very man; or, as the apostle better expresses it, "God manifest in the flesh." But it is not alone: on the contrary, the Messiah is seldom mentioned, but something is either said of him, or referred to him, which teaches us the same important truth. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord (by Jeremiah, chap. xxiii.), that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be

saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Isaiah in general styles him, "A child to be born;" Jeremiah more particularly, a "Branch of David:" Isaiah ascribes to him the name of "The Mighty God;" Jeremiah says, he shall be called "The Lord our righteousness." You have the word LORD in capital letters here, as in other places, where it is in the original JEHOVAH. Some of the names of God are occasionally applied to inferior subjects, to angels, to magistrates, and sometimes to idols. But *Jehovah* is allowed by all to signify the essential and incommunicable name of the Most High God. Yet this is not the only place where it is expressly and directly applied to the Messiah. David himself speaks to the same purpose: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand," Psalm cx. That the Messiah was to be David's son, was known and acknowledged by the Jews in our Saviour's time; but how he could be the son of David, and yet his Lord, was a difficulty that utterly posed and silenced the most learned Rabbis and Scribes among them; because, being destitute of that sincerity and humility we have before spoken of, they could not understand the scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every day.

Now, although this important doctrine was not to be discovered by the light of nature, or the powers of human reason, yet, since it has pleased God to make it known to us, our reason, humbly tracing the steps of divine revelation, can easily prove the expediency, and even the necessity that it should be so. When we are informed from scripture, that all mankind being sunk into a state of sin and misery, God had in great mercy appointed a person to atone for the one, and deliver them from the other; we may safely, from these principles, infer, by our own reason, 1st, That this person cannot be mere man: for as the whole human race, and consequently every individual, is supposed to be previously involved in the same circumstances of guilt and condemnation, it is impossible that any one of these should be able either to answer or satisfy for himself, much less be qualified to interpose in behalf of another. From hence reason may ascend a step higher, and conclude, 2d, That no mere creature, however great and excellent, can undertake this part; for the two great points necessary in order to our redemption, to satisfy the justice of God, and to restore the divine image in man, are either of them beyond the sphere of finite power. We read in the scriptures of angels, archangels, thrones, principalities, and powers; and from several texts we may collect, that their number and excellencies are beyond any conceptions we can form. Could we suppose that the virtues and endowments of all these various and exalted beings were united and centered in one of them; however glorious this being would be in other respects, when we consider him as a creature of the divine power, he will be found to be as unfit, and as unable, to interfere in the behalf of sinful man, as the meanest worm that crawls upon the earth. It is the duty of every being, great and small, to be entirely devoted, according to the extent of its capacity, to the service and glory of its great Creator; therefore an angel is no more capable than a man of performing the smallest work of supererogation. The highest archangel could not magnify the law of God, and make it honourable on the behalf of man, being already bound thereto for himself: much less can we suppose such a being capable of expiating the sins of mankind by suffering. If divine justice insisted on a propitiation, it must follow, that nothing less than an equivalent could be accepted. But what would be the temporary sufferings of a creature, or of all creatures, in this view? A finite satisfaction, however heightened and exaggerated, would at last be infinitely short of the demand. As to the other branch of redemption, the restoration of the image of God in the soul, I need only mention it; for it appears, at first glance, that this must be the prerogative of divine power alone to effect. It remains, therefore, that the deliverance of mankind could only be attempted by him, who, we are assured by the apostle, agreeable to the passages already cited, is over all, God blessed for ever.

That the Son of God should take upon him the nature and circumstances of our humanity, sin excepted, in order to atone for our transgressions, is indeed such an instance of condescension and love, as must for ever dazzle and astonish the brightest understandings. It is true, some persons in these refined times affect to speak of this point with admirable coolness and precision. But in the beginning it was not so. Either the apostle Paul was less master of his temper, or more unequal to sublime speculations, than these gentlemen, or else we must allow he had a very different view of the subject: for he cannot mention it without appearing to be transported, and (if I may use the expression) swallowed up by the thought; his ideas seem too great for words; and it is well if his best attempts to explain himself have not exposed him, in the judgment of some of his readers to the charge of solecism. However, though this doctrine, above any other, is a proof that God "is able to do for us exceeding abundantly beyond all we could ask or think," it is not, upon the premises I before mentioned, in the least repugnant to right reason; rather it is exactly calculated to remove all those surmises which would rise in the mind of a reasonable sinner upon the first intimation of possible forgiveness. In our nature Christ fulfilled the law which we had broken: he sustained the pe-

nalty we had incurred: he vanquished the enemies we had to encounter; he trod the path which he has marked out for us; he is entered in our name into that heaven he has promised us; and retains a sympathy with us in all our sufferings and temptations, "in as much as he himself has suffered, being tempted," Heb. ii.

I am next to consider the testimony of scripture concerning the offices of Christ. These are, in general, included in the character of Mediator. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii. In this word is summed up all that Christ has already done, now does, or will hereafter do, either on the part of God or on that of man. But for our better apprehension, it is proposed to us under three distinct and principal views, answerable to the three particulars in which the misery of fallen man does principally consist.

And, first, man, having departed from God, "became vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. i.), so that he totally lost the knowledge of his Creator, and how entirely his happiness depended thereon. He forgot God and himself, and sunk so low as to worship the work of his own hands. His life became vain and miserable: in prosperity, without security or satisfaction; in adversity, without support or resource: his death dark and hopeless; no pleasing reflection on the past, no ray of light on the future. Such was the unhappy case when Christ undertook the office of a Prophet: in which character, under various dispensations, first by his servants inspired of old, and afterwards more clearly in his own person, and by his apostles, he has instructed us in the things pertaining to our peace; not only renewing in us the knowledge of the true God, which, where revelation prevailed not, was universally lost out of the world, but disclosing to us the counsels of divine love and wisdom in our favour, those great things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, had not he who dwelt in the bosom of the Father declared them to us. We can now give a sufficient answer to that question, which must have for ever overwhelmed every serious awakened mind, "Wherewithal shall I appear before the Most High God?" Mic. vi. We have now learned how God can declare and illustrate his righteousness and truth, by that very act which, without respect to satisfaction given, would seem the highest impeachment of both, I mean his justifying the ungodly. We have now a glass by which we can discover the presence of the Creator in every part of his creation, and a clue to lead us through the mysterious mazes of divine providence. But who can enumerate the various, the important, the interesting lessons we receive from this heavenly Teacher, when, by the influence of his Holy Spirit he powerfully applies his written word to the hearts of his real disciples, who search the scriptures with a sincere desire to be made wise unto salvation! Whatever is necessary to make life useful and comfortable, and to gild the gloom of death with the bright prospect of a glorious immortality, is there contained: so that, instructed, by these writings alone, a poor illiterate mechanic has been often enabled to converse upon a dying-bed with more dignity, certainty, and influence, than any, or all the philosophers, ancient or modern, could attain.

But, besides the natural ignorance of fallen man, he was chargeable with aggravated guilt. Guilt and ignorance are reciprocally causes and consequences of each other. Every additional guilt tends to increase the stupidity of the human soul, and every increase of this increases in the same proportion the natural indisposition for the practice or the love of virtue, makes the soul more blind to consequences, more base in its pursuits, and thus to become a more willing and assiduous servant of iniquity. No wonder, therefore, that when the understanding was totally darkened as to the knowledge of God, the will and affections became wholly disobedient to his law. But when a divine light has in some measure discovered the heart to itself, and at the same time set an offended God in view, every such sensible sinner would undoubtedly imitate our first parents, and flee (were it possible) from the presence of his Maker and his Judge. "I heard thy voice," says Adam, "and I hid myself, for I was afraid," Gen. iii. Vain attempt! and, if it were practicable, a dreadful alternative! since absence from God imports the utmost misery to a creature who can be happy only in his favour. But here the scriptures bring us unspeakable comfort, testifying of Christ as our great High-Priest. To point out and illustrate this part of his character is the chief end and design of the whole Levitical law, the main points of which are explained, and applied to our blessed Lord, throughout the epistle to the Hebrews. The principal parts of the priests office were, to sacrifice in behalf of the people, to make atonement, to pray for them, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. No sacrifices could be offered or accepted, no blessings expected, but through the hands of the priests whom God had appointed. Thus Christ, the High-Priest of our profession, offered himself a sacrifice without either spot or blemish: he entered with his own blood within the vail, to the immediate presence of our offended God, and through him peace and good-will is proclaimed to sinful men. He continues still to exercise the other part of his appointment. he makes continual intercession for his people; he presents their prayers and imperfect services acceptable before the throne; he gives them confidence and access to draw nigh to

God; and he bestows upon them those gifts and blessings which are the fruits of his sufferings and obedience. The Levitical priests were, like their people, sinners, and were therefore constrained first to make atonement for themselves; they were mortal, therefore their service passed from hand to hand; their sacrifices were imperfect, therefore needed continual repetition, and had at last only a typical and ceremonial efficacy; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. ix. and x.) could remove either the guilt or pollution of sin. "The law made nothing perfect." But Jesus, "the Mediator of the new covenant," is "such a High-Priest as became us; holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who needeth not (as those of old) to offer sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the people; for this he did once, when he offered up himself," Heb. vii. The great inference from this doctrine, several times repeated by the apostle in a variety of phrase, is, that we may now have boldness to appear before God, that our prayers and services are pleasing in his sight, and all the blessings of grace and glory ready to be bestowed on us, if we faithfully apply for them, through the merits of his Son.

Once more, man is not only ignorant of God and himself, and too full of guilt to plead in his own name, but he is likewise weak and defenceless; unable to make his way through the opposition that withstands his progress to eternal life, or to secure him from the many enemies "that rise up against him." Psal. iii. We read, that when the Gibeonites made a league with Joshua (Jos. ix.), which was the only step that could save them from utter ruin, the neighbouring states and cities all united to destroy them: so the soul that is desirous to submit to Jesus Christ, immediately finds itself in the midst of war; the world, the flesh, and the devil, unite their forces, either to recal such a one to the practice and service of sin, or to distress him to the uttermost for forsaking it. And none could support this conflict, if not themselves supported by a higher hand. But Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, the true Captain of the Lord's hosts, reveals himself in his word as the King of his church. He can inspire the fainting soul with unseen supplies: he, when the enemy comes in like a flood (Isa. lix.), can, by his Spirit, lift up a standard against him; he can take the prey even out of the hand of the mighty. He has said it of his church in general, and he will make it good to every individual that trusts in him, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against them. What though a sense of the guilt and remaining power of sin often fills the humble soul with inexpressible distress! He that stills the raging of the sea, and the violence of the winds, with a word, can with equal ease calm all the unruly motions of the mind. What though the world opposes in every quarter, and presents snares and terrors all around! What though rage or contempt, threats or allurements, are by turns, or altogether, employed to ruin us; behold, "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world" (1 John iv.); "Christ has overcome the world for us" (John xvi.), and has promised to make us conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, in our turn. What though "the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. vi.); it is an argument of the strongest kind for watchfulness and prayer. But we need not fear him: The "beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety" (Deut. xxxiii.): The "Lord shall cover him all the day long; he shall deliver him from the snare of the fowler" (Psal. xci.); "his truth shall be a shield and buckler" to all who enlist under his banner; and at length, yea, shortly, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet," Rom. xvi.

It is thus the scriptures, to help the weakness of our apprehensions, testify of Christ, under the threefold view of Prophet, Priest, and King of his people. These are his principal and leading characters, which include and imply the rest; for the time would fail to speak of him, as he is declared to be their head, husband, root, foundation, sun, shield, shepherd, lawgiver, exemplar, and forerunner. In brief, there is hardly any comfortable relation or useful office amongst men, hardly any object in the visible creation, which either displays beauty or produces benefit, but what is applied in the word of God, to illustrate the excellence and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. The intent of all is, that we may learn to trust him, and delight to serve him; for these must go together. Whoever would be benefited by his mediation as a Priest, must submit to his instructions as a Prophet, and yield him universal obedience as a King. Fatal are the mistakes in this matter now in the world. Some talk highly of the death and sufferings of Christ, who are little solicitous to keep his commandments; others labour in the very fire to observe his law; but "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own" (Rom. x.), they labour to no purpose. Dependence on the merits of Christ, and obedience to his commands, are inseparably united; and only the man who aims at both, can attain to either.

I should now lay before you some scripture testimonies of the power and love of Christ; but I have anticipated this part of my subject in what I have already said. His divine nature proclaims his power, his offices display his love. We have seen, that he emptied himself of his eternal glories; that he bowed the heavens, and came down in the form of a servant; that he submitted to all imaginable sufferings; all that the malice of

men, all that the avenging justice of God could inflict; and having by this means opened the kingdom of heaven, and taken possession there, in behalf of all believers, he has caused the glad tidings of salvation to be published through the world; declaring, "that whosoever cometh to him (without one exception), he will in no wise cast out," John vi. Are not these proofs of unspeakable, unexampled love? We have seen, that he fully performed the work he undertook; that he has made an end of sin (Dan. ix.); brought in an everlasting righteousness, spoiled principalities and powers (Eph. ii.); triumphed over all our enemies, broke down the partition-wall, and brought life and immortality to light by his gospel, 1 Tim. i. We read, that he is highly exalted; "that God has given him a name that is above every name" (Phil. ii.); that he is "far above all principality, and might, and dominion;" and what more can be said of his power? Read his own declaration, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth," Matth. xxviii. Were these two points, the power and the love of Christ, rightly understood, and fully believed, earth would be full of heaven. But, alas! we are fools, and slow of heart to receive all that Moses and the prophets (Luke, xxiv.), the evangelists and apostles, have written for our instruction. From hence proceeds our indifference, and that we need so much to be pressed to search the scriptures, though we readily acknowledge that in them we have the words of eternal life.

IV. It remains, therefore, in the fourth and last place, that I add a few words to recommend and enforce the command in the text, "Search the scriptures," from the argument there subjoined, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life;" and we think right; for it "is eternal life to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent" (John xvii.): and every article of this knowledge is contained in the Old and New Testament; nor can any part of it be met with any where else. Yet let conscience judge this day, as in the presence of the living God, the searcher of hearts, before whom our private judgments must shortly come under a review: has any book a smaller share of the time, the memory, or the affections of many of us, than this book of God? Do not the successive returns of business and amusement so far engross our time and our thoughts, that we have either no leisure, or no disposition, to attend to the things which pertain to our peace? Consider, "in them we think we have eternal life." We know we are posting to eternity as fast as the wings of time can carry us; we know that the consequences of our behaviour in this span of life will attend us into an invisible unalterable state; and we confess, that the necessary directions for our conduct in these most important and precarious circumstances, are to be found only in the Bible; what words then can describe our fatal insensibility, if, all this acknowledged, we have no heart to consult, or to value, this inestimable treasure put into our hands?

Many inquiries, more curious than useful, have been started concerning the divine procedure with the Heathen nations, and those who never heard of the gospel of peace. "The Judge of all the earth will (undoubtedly) do right" (Gen. xviii.), and will be justified at the great day, when every man shall receive according to their works. Till then we must wait for the knowledge of what he has not seen fit to reveal. But thus much he has already told us, that however it may go with those who know not the gospel, dreadful will be the doom of those who, having it published among them, refuse to obey it. "The servant who knew not his master's will shall be beaten with few stripes," Luke xii. But this will not be our case; at least our ignorance will be rather an aggravation than an excuse; a wilful, obstinate, infatuated ignorance. We have the words of eternal life in our hands; "line upon line, precept upon precept:" but how do we imitate those (whom perhaps we have been ready to blame) spoken of in the parable, who, when they received a kind and gracious invitation to a royal feast, made light of it, and "all with one consent began to make excuse!" Luke xiv. It is easy to apply this to the Jews of old; so David could clearly judge in the case of the rich man who killed his poor neighbour's lamb (2 Sam. xii.), but had not the prophet helped him, he would not have collected that he himself was the person intended. But to bring the general truths of scripture home to the heart is the work of God; and, perhaps, while I am speaking at random, he may rouse the consciences of some to say in particular, Thou art the man. Then they will soon see how much it behoves them to search the scriptures, when they understand the weighty meaning of the words, eternal life.

Some of us, I hope, do already make conscience of frequent reading the scriptures; but let us remember the force of the word *search*. It is not a careless superficial reading, or dispatching such a number of chapters in a day, as a task, that will answer the end. I have already reminded you, that it is a business will need your best application; a serious, impartial, humble, persevering inquiry, accompanied with earnest prayer for the light and assistance of God's Holy Spirit. When we set about it in this method, we shall soon find happy effects; pleasure and instruction will go hand in hand; and our knowledge advance as the growing light. The precepts shall inspire us with true wisdom; teach us how to order all our affairs, respecting both worlds; to fill up our several stations in life with propriety, usefulness, and comfort; and

to avoid the numerous evils and distresses which those who live by no rule, or by any other rule than God's word, are perpetually running into. The promises shall be a support in every trouble, a medicine in every sickness, a supply in every need. Above all, the scriptures will repay our trouble, as they testify of Christ. The more we read of his person, offices, power, love, doctrine, life, and death, the more our hearts will cleave to him: we shall, by insensible degrees, be transformed into his image. We shall, with the apostle, say, "I know in whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. Every thing we see shall be at once a memorial to remind us of our Redeemer, and a motive to animate us in his service. And at length we shall be removed to see him as he is, without a cloud, and without a vail; to be for ever with him; to behold and to share the glories of that heavenly kingdom "which (Matth. xxv.) he has prepared (for his followers) from before the foundation of the world." Amen.

SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE PARISH-CHURCH OF OLNEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. PSAL. lxxxix. 15, 16.

TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF OLNEY.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I HAVE principally two motives for publishing these Discourses. The one is, to exhibit a specimen of the doctrine that is taught and most surely believed amongst us, to satisfy those who desire information, and to stop, if possible, the mouth of Slander. I cheerfully submit them to examination, in full confidence that they contain nothing of moment which is not agreeable to the general strain of the word of God, and to the principles of the church whereof I am a minister, as specified in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies. And that what I now print is to the same purport with the usual course of my preaching, I doubt not but all who statedly hear me, will do me the justice to acknowledge.

My other motive is, a desire of promoting your edification. It is my comfort that many of you live by the truths of the gospel, and highly prize them. You will not, therefore, be unwilling to view the substance of what you once heard with acceptance. But it is to be feared, that the far greater part of the congregation have need to have the things pertaining to their peace pressed upon them again and again, for a different reason; not because they know them, and therefore love to have them brought to their remembrance, but because they have hitherto heard them without effect. For the sake of both, therefore, I am willing to leave an abiding testimony amongst you. I hereby take each of your consciences to witness, that I am clear of your blood; and that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

In the choice of the subjects I have selected for publication, I have not been solicitous to comprise a succinct scheme of gospel-doctrine, but have given the preference to such topics, which the peculiar circumstances of the times, and of my hearers, make me desirous might be had in continual remembrance.

The exposition of the third commandment, which was first delivered in your hearing, I afterwards preached (nearer the form in which it now appears) at London; and as it led me to touch on some particulars of a very public and interesting concern, I have given it a place in this volume. And I shall think myself happy indeed, if it may please God to give weight to the testimony of so obscure a person, with respect to a grievance under which the nation groans.

As long discourses are in many respects inconvenient, I have chosen to publish no more than a brief summary of what you heard more at large from the pulpit. And as I aim to speak plain truths to a plain people, I have purposely avoided any studied ornaments in point of expression, being desirous to accommodate myself to the apprehensions of the most ignorant.

May it please the God of all grace to accompany my feeble endeavours to promote the knowledge of his truth with the powerful influence of his Holy Spirit! And I earnestly entreat all who know how to draw near to a throne of grace by Jesus Christ, to strive mightily in prayer for me, that I may stand fast in the faith, and increase in the knowledge of Jesus the Saviour, and that, for his sake, I may labour, without fear of fainting, in the service to which he has been pleased to call me. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

I am your affectionate friend, and servant in the gospel of Christ,

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, January 20 1767.

SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE PARISH-CHURCH OF OLNEY.

SERMON I.

THE SMALL SUCCESS OF A GOSPEL-MINISTRY

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. MATTH xi 25.

OUR blessed Lord perfectly knew beforehand the persons who would profit by his ministry: but his observations, conduct, and discourses, were intended as a pattern and instruction to his followers. He is said to have marvelled at the unbelief of some, and at the faith of others; not as though either was strange to him, who was acquainted with all hearts, and always knew what he himself could do; but it is spoken of him as a man, and to shew how his ministers and people should be affected upon the like occasions. In the preceding verses he had been speaking of Capernaum, and other places, where his mighty works had been performed in vain. He had denounced a sentence against them: and foretold that their punishment would be heavier in proportion to the greatness of the privileges they had abused. But this was not his pleasing work. Mercy and grace were his delight, and he usually expressed sorrow and pain for the obstinacy of sinners. He wept for his avowed enemies, and prayed for the murderers who nailed him to the cross. It was not without grief that he declared the approaching doom of these cities; yet raising is thoughts from earth to heaven, he acquiesced in the will of his heavenly Father, and expressed the highest satisfaction in his appointment. He knew, that, however some would harden themselves, there was a remnant who would receive the truth, and that the riches and glory of the divine sovereignty and grace would be magnified. Before I enter upon the particulars, this connection of the words will afford us ground for some observations.

I. That the small success and efficacy o the preached gospel upon multitudes who hear it, is a subject of wonder and grief to the ministers and people of God. It was so to our Lord Jesus, considered as a preacher and messenger; and they, so far as they have received his Spirit, judge and act as he did.

1. Those who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, have had such a powerful experience in their own souls of the necessity and value of the gospel, that in their first warmth, and till painful experience has convinced them of the contrary, they can hardly think it possible that sinners should stand out against its evidence. They are ready to say, "Surely it is because they are ignorant; they have not had opportunity of considering the evil of sin, the curse of the law, and the immense goodness of God manifested in his Son;

but when these things shall be plainly and faithfully set before them, surely they will submit, and thankfully receive the glad tidings." With such sanguine hopes Melancthon entered the ministry at the dawn of the Reformation: he thought he had only to speak and to be heard, in order to convince; but he soon found himself mistaken, and that the love of sin, the power of prejudice, and the devices of Satan, were such obstacles in his way, as nothing less than the mighty operations of the Spirit of God could break through. And all who preach upon his principles, and with his views, have known something of his disappointment. Speaking from the feelings of a full heart, they are ready to expect that others should be no less affected than themselves. But when they find that they are heard with indifference, perhaps with contempt; that those whose salvation they long for, are enraged against them for their labour of love; and that they cannot prevail upon even their dearest friends, and nearest relatives,—this grieves and wounds them to the heart.

2. They have been convinced themselves, that unbelief was the worst of all their sins: and therefore, though they pity all who live in the practice of sin, yet they have a double grief to see them reject the only means of salvation: and that this contempt will lie more heavily upon them, than any thing they can be charged with besides. It gladdens the heart of a minister to see a large and attentive assembly; but how is this joy damped by a just fear, lest any, lest many of them should receive this grace of God in vain, and have cause at last to bewail the day when the name of Jesus was first sounded in their ears!

It seems plain then, that those who are indifferent about the event of the gospel, who satisfy themselves with this thought, that the elect shall be saved, and feel no concern for unawakened sinners, make a wrong inference from a true doctrine, and know not what spirit they are of. Jesus wept for those who perished in their sins. St. Paul had great grief and sorrow of heart for the Jews, though he gave them this character, "That they pleased not God, and were contrary to all men." It well becomes us, while we admire distinguishing grace to ourselves, to mourn over others: and inasmuch as secret things belong to the Lord, and we know not but some of whom we have at present but little hopes, may at last be brought to the knowledge of the truth, we should be patient and forbearing, after the pattern of our heavenly Father, and endeavour, by every probable and prudent means, to stir them up to repentance, remembering that they cannot be more distant from God, than by nature we were ourselves.

II. The best relief against those discouragements we meet with from men, is to raise our thoughts to God and heaven. For this the Lord Jesus is our precedent here. He said, "I thank thee, O Father." The word * signifies, to confess, to promise, or consent, and to praise. As if it had been said, "I glorify thy wisdom in this respect, I acknowledge, and declare that it is thy will, and I express my own consent and approbation." Our Lord's views of the divine counsels were perfect, and therefore his satisfaction was complete. It is said, "He rejoiced in spirit" (Luke x. 21.), when he uttered these words. And the more we increase in faith and in the knowledge of God, the more we shall be satisfied in his appointments, and shall see and say, "He hath done all things well." It is needful for our comfort to be well established in the truth suggested in my text, That the Lord hath provided for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and that his counsels shall surely stand. From this doctrine we may infer,

1. That where the faithful labours and endeavours of ministers and others, to promote the knowledge of grace and the practice of holiness, fail of success, yet they shall be accepted. The servants of Christ may in their humble measure adopt the words of their Lord and Master, in the prophet: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength," Isaiah xlix. 5. When he sent forth his first disciples, he directed them, whenever they entered, to say, "Peace be to this house! and if a son of peace be there," if there be any who thankfully accept your salutation and message, "your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall return to you again," Luke x. 6. That is, your good wishes and endeavours shall not be lost for want of proper objects, but, when they seem to be without effect on others, shall be productive of the happiest consequences to yourselves: you shall receive all you were desirous to communicate. Thus his ministers are to declare his whole will, whether men will hear, or whether they shall forbear. And if they do this with a single eye to his glory, and in humble dependence upon his blessing, they are not answerable for the event; they shall in no wise lose their reward.

2. Faithful endeavours in the service of the gospel shall not wholly fail. Though all will not hear, some certainly shall both hear and obey. Though all are by nature equally averse and incapable, yet there shall be "a willing people in the day of God's power," Psalm cx. 3. If the wise and prudent turn away from the truth, there are babes to whom it shall be revealed. The Lord renews unto us a pledge of his faithfulness in this concern every time the rain descends. For thus he has promised, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may

* The original word, ἐξομολογοῦμαι, occurs Matth. iii 6. Luke xxii. 6. and Rom. xv. 9.

give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isaiah lv. 10.

3. The divine sovereignty is the best thought we can retreat to for composing and strengthening our minds under the difficulties, discouragements, and disappointments, which attend the publication of the gospel. The more we give way to reasonings and curious inquiries, the more we shall be perplexed and baffled. When Jeremiah had been complaining of some things that were too hard for him, the Lord sent him to the potter's house, and taught him to infer, from the potter's power over the clay, the just right which the Lord of all hath to do what he will with his own, Jer. xviii. 6. It is only the pride of our own hearts that prevents this consideration from being perfectly conclusive and satisfactory. How many schemes derogatory from the free grace of God, tending to darken the glory of the gospel, and to depreciate the righteousness of the Redeemer, have taken their rise from vain unnecessary attempts to vindicate the ways of God; or rather to limit the actings of Infinite Wisdom to the bounds of our narrow understandings, to sound the depths of the divine counsels with our feeble plummets, and to say to Omnipotence, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther." But upon the ground of the divine sovereignty, we may rest satisfied and stable: for if God appoints and over-rules all according to the purpose of his own will, we have sufficient security, both for the present and the future.

1st, For the present. We may firmly expect, what scripture and reason concur to assure us, that "the Judge of all the earth will do right." Whatever to us appears otherwise in his proceedings, should be charged to the darkness and weakness of our minds. We know, that in every point of science, difficulties and objections occur to young beginners, which, at first view, may seem almost unanswerable; but as knowledge increases, the difficulties gradually subside, and at last we perceive they were chiefly owing to the defects of our apprehension. In divinity it is wholly so; "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" his revealed will is, like himself, just, holy, pure in the whole, and perfectly consistent in every part. We may safely rest upon this general maxim, that "the Judge of all the earth shall do right." Though he does not give us a particular account of his dealings, and we are not fully able to comprehend them; yet we ought, against all appearances and proud reasonings, to settle it firmly in our minds, that every thing is conducted worthy the views which God has given us of himself in his holy word, as a being of infinite justice, wisdom, goodness, and truth And farther,

2dly, For the future. He has appointed a day when he will make it appear that he has done right. Though clouds and darkness are now upon his proceedings, they shall ere long be removed. When all his designs in providence and grace are completed; when the present imperfect state of things shall be finished; when the dead, small and great, are summoned to stand before him,—then the great Judge will condescend to unfold the whole train of his dispensations, and will justify his proceedings before angels and men. Then every presumptuous cavil shall be silenced, and every difficulty solved. His people shall admire his wisdom, his enemies shall confess his justice. The destruction of those who perish shall be acknowledged deserved, and of themselves; and the redeemed of the Lord shall ascribe all the glory of their salvation to him alone. What we shall then see, it is now our duty and our comfort assuredly to believe.

The great subject of our Saviour's joy, and which, so far as it is apprehended, will bear up his servants above all their difficulties and disappointments, I mean the consideration of the sovereign hand of God directing the success of his word when and where he pleases, we must defer speaking of till the next opportunity; and we shall close at present with a few inferences from what has been said thus far, by way of introduction.

1. Take heed how you hear. The gospel of salvation, which is sent to you, will be either "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death," to every soul of you. There is no medium. Though, in a common and familiar way of speaking, we sometimes complain that the gospel is preached without effect, there is in reality no possibility that it can be without effect: an effect it must and will have upon all who hear it. Happy they who receive and embrace it as a joyful sound, the unspeakable gift of God's love. To these it will be "a savour of life unto life." It will communicate life to the soul at first, and maintain that life, in defiance of all opposition, till it terminates in glory. But woe, woe to those who receive it not. It will be to them "a savour of death unto death." It will leave them under the sentence of death, already denounced against them by the law which they have transgressed, and it will consign them to eternal death, under the heaviest aggravations of guilt and misery. Remember the doom of Capernaum, and why it was denounced. Jesus preached amongst them the words of eternal life, and they rejected him. This was all. In other things, perhaps, they were no worse than their neighbours, and probably disdained to hear themselves judged worthy of a heavier punishment than Sodom, and those cities which, for their

abominations, were consumed with fire from heaven. But our Lord assures us, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who slight his word. For this guilt and condemnation was not confined to the Jews who rejected his person, but extends to all who shall at any time treat his gospel with contempt. However inconsiderable his ministers are in other respects, if they faithfully deliver his message, he has declared himself closely interested in the reception they meet with: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth both me and him that sent me," Matth. x. 40. It is therefore at your peril to treat what we say with indifference (if we speak agreeably to the scriptures): the word of God which we preach will judge you at the last day.

2. Be afraid of being wise in your own eyes, lest you should approach to the characters of those from whom the righteous God sees fit to hide the knowledge of those truths, without which they cannot be saved. The gospel is not proposed to you to ask your opinion of it, that it may stand or fall according to your decision, but it peremptorily demands your submission. If you think yourselves qualified to judge and examine it by that imperfect and depraved light which you call your reason, you will probably find reasons enow to refuse your assent. Reason is properly exercised in the ordinary concerns of life, and has so far a place in religious inquiries, that none can or do believe the gospel without having sufficient reasons for it. But you need a higher light, the light of God's Spirit, without which the most glorious displays of his wisdom will appear foolishness to you. If you come simple, dependent, and teachable; if you pray from your heart, with David, "open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things in thy law (Psal. cxix. 18),—you will be heard and answered; you will grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; but if you neglect this, and trust in yourselves, as supposing this promised assistance of the Holy Spirit unnecessary, the glorious light of the gospel will shine upon you in vain; for Satan will maintain such hold of you by this pride of your hearts, as still to keep you in bondage and darkness, that you shall neither see it, nor desire to see it.

3. Those of you who have some spiritual apprehensions of these things, have reason to praise God that you see a little. You were once quite blind; you neither saw your disease nor your remedy. You could discern nothing of the excellence of Christ, or the beauty of holiness. But now the eyes of your understanding are in some measure enlightened. It is the grace of God has made you thus far to differ from what you once were, and from what multitudes around you still are. Be thankful. Accept it as a token for good. Be not discouraged that the beginnings are small, but wait on the Lord, and they shall be increased. Seek him by prayer. Converse with your Bibles. Attend upon the public ordinances. In the humble use of these means (while you endeavour to act faithfully according to the light you have already received), you shall gradually advance in wisdom and comfort. The christian growth is not instantaneous but by degrees, as the early dawn increases in brightness till the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18), and as the corn comes forward surely, though unperceived, Matth. xiii. 31, 32. In this manner your views of gospel-truth shall increase in clearness, evidence, and influence, till you are removed from this land of shadows to the regions of perfect light, to behold the truth as it shines in the person of Jesus, without a vail, and without a cloud for ever

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SERMON II.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE GOSPEL HID FROM MANY.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. MATTH xi. 25.

WHEN our Lord appeared upon earth, though he came on the most gracious and important business, displayed the perfection of holiness in his conduct, and performed innumerable acts of kindness and love, he met with little regard. He found many enemies, but few hearty friends. Especially those who were most eminent for riches, learning, power, or reputed goodness, disdained him; and most of those who followed him were either people in low circumstances, or whose character had been offensive. Publicans and sinners, fishermen, unlearned and obscure persons, were almost the only friends he had. The Lord Jesus, who was infinitely above the selfish views which are too apt to influence our little minds, was well satisfied with this event. He did not desire honour from men. "The souls of the poor were precious in his sight," Psal. lxxii. 13, 14. He spoke kindly to those whom men abhorred; and if he mourned over the obstinacy of the chiefs of the people, it was for their own sakes. Yet (as I observed formerly) when he considered the appointment and will of God in this dispensation, he was not only content, but he rejoiced. He expressed his approbation in these words: "I thank thee, O Father," &c. There is something observable in this passage which will be of continual use and application to

long as the gospel shall be preached. For as it was then, so is it still; the things that are hid from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes. Five particulars offer from the words for our consideration:

1. What may be intended by *these things?*
2. Where and in what sense they are *hid?*
3. From whom? *The wise and prudent.*
4. How the knowledge of them is to be obtained? By revelation: *Thou hast revealed.*
5. Who are thus favoured? *Babes.*

I. By the things which it pleases God should be hid from the wise, and revealed to babes, we may understand,

1. In general, the things pertaining to salvation. That most men are ignorant of them, and careless about them, is too plain. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the tree is known by its fruits. Men speak as though their tongues were their own; they act as though they were to give no account; they live as though they were to live here for ever. The way of truth is hid from their eyes, and the fear of God has no place in their hearts.

2. More particularly, those doctrines which are in an especial sense peculiar to the gospel, seem here to be intended. If the principles of what some call natural religion, though agreeable to the light of natural conscience, are little regarded, the more spiritual truths of the Bible are not only neglected but scorned and opposed. The same spirit which shewed itself under our Lord's personal ministry still subsists. The chief doctrines he taught, and for which he met with the fiercest opposition, were precisely the same with those which have awakened the scorn and rage of the world ever since, and which multitudes who bear the name of christians in this day oppose with all their strength. Such as,

1st, The divinity of Christ.——When he spoke of himself as existing before Abraham, and said that God was his *own* Father,* the Jews took up stones to stone him. And this mystery is still hid from the natural man. No one can say, acknowledge, and believe that Jesus Christ is Lord or Jehovah; that he who once hung upon the cross, bleeding to death, is God the maker of all things, the rightful object of the supreme love, trust, and homage of men and angels, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. xii. 3.

2dly, Distinguishing grace.—When Jesus first preached at Nazareth, the eyes of all were fixed upon him (Luke iv. 16, 20); but when, making application to themselves, he touched upon this point, from the examples of Naaman the Syrian, and the widow of Sarepta, who were released when many lepers and widows in Israel were passed by; they were filled with indignation, and would have thrown him headlong down the rock. And it is to this hour an offensive doctrine to all who do not know the value and the need of it.

3dly, The new birth.—When this was proposed to a master in Israel, he cried out, "How can these things be?" John iii. 9. And by many who are wise and prudent in their own sight it is at this day accounted nonsense. A small acquaintance with the general strain of what is published either from the pulpit or the press, may prove that modern divinity has, for the most part, found a smoother path to tread than that by which Nicodemus was conducted to the knowledge of himself and his Saviour. Such a doubtful inquirer might now be entertained with many ingenious essays on the beauty of virtue, the efficacy of benevolence, the excellency of the human mind, and other favourite topics. He would find teachers enow to encourage and improve the idea he has of his own importance, but he would hardly meet with any who would speak to him in our Lord's language, and refer him to the brazen serpent, and a new birth, in order to learn the means and the nature of the gospel-salvation.

4thly, The nature of the life of faith.—When our Lord spoke of this, under the metaphor of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, many who till then had professed themselves his disciples, "turned back, and walked no more with him," John, vi. 66. And none can bear it now who are not taught of God, to see such an excellency and sufficiency in Jesus, and such emptiness in themselves, as constrains them to cry out with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" John, vi. 68. These things are hid from the wise and prudent. But,

II. Where, and in what sense, are these things hid?

1. Where are they hid?

1st, They are hid in Christ. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. He is the great repository of truth. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. And he is the messenger by whom the will of God is made known to man, Luke, ix. 35; John, i. 18. From hence observe,

(1.) You can attain to no saving truth, but in and by the knowledge of Jesus Christ. If they are hid in him, it can be but lost labour to seek them elsewhere.

(2.) Whatever seeming knowledge you have, if it does not endear him to you, it is nothing worth. It is science falsely so called,

* John v. 18. Πατερα ἴδιον ἐλεγε. "He said that God was his *own* Father," in a sense peculiar to himself, and exclusive of all others. The Jews well understood the meaning of this assertion, that thereby *he made himself equal with God;* and therefore, as they did not believe in him, they charged him with blasphemy. It would indeed have been blasphemy in a mere man, or in the highest archangel, to have spoken of himself in these terms. But the force of the expression is lost in our version of the New Testament, through the omission of the word ἴδιον, *his own*, which seems one of the most important mistakes to be found in that translation.

and can do you no good; for in the knowledge of him, and of him alone, is eternal life, John xvii. 3.

2dly, They are hid in the word of God.

(1.) They are contained there. "The whole scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is able to make us wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. iii. 16.): to furnish us with a sufficiency of knowledge and motives for every good work. The word of God is perfect.

(2.) Yet though contained there, they are not plain to every eye. Though they are revealed in the letter, they are still hid from the wise and prudent. Something more is necessary than barely to read, in order to understand them; otherwise all who can read, and have the Bible, would be equally enlightened with equal application. But experience shews it far otherwise. This leads me farther to inquire.

2. In what sense they are hid?

1st, They are not hid as if it were on purpose that those who sincerely seek them should be disappointed in their search. Far be it from us to think so hardly of the Lord. We have express promises to the contrary, that all who earnestly seek shall find. Fear not, you that sincerely desire an experimental and practical knowledge of the truths of God, and are willing to be taught in his appointed way: though many things appear difficult to you at present, the Lord will gradually increase your light, and crown your endeavours with success.

2dly, But from some persons they are hid, even from the wise and prudent, whom we are to speak of hereafter. Suffer me to offer a familiar illustration of the Lord's wisdom and justice in this procedure. Let me suppose a person to have a curious cabinet, which is opened at his pleasure, and not exposed to common view: he invites all to come and see it, and offers to shew it to any one who asks him. It is hid, because he keeps the key; but none can complain, because he is ready to open it whenever he is desired. Some, perhaps, disdain the offer, and say, Why is it locked at all? Some think it not worth seeing, or amuse themselves with guessing at the contents. But those who are simply desirous for themselves, leave others disputing, go according to appointment, and are gratified. These have reason to be thankful for the favour; and the others have no just cause to find fault. Thus the riches of divine grace may be compared to a richly-furnished cabinet, to which Christ is the door. The word of God likewise is a cabinet generally locked up; but the key of prayer will open it. The Lord invites all; but he keeps the dispensation in his own hand. They cannot see these things except he shews them; but then he refuses none that sincerely ask him. The wise men of the world can go no farther than the outside of this cabinet; they may amuse themselves and surprise others with their ingenious guesses at what is within; but a babe that has seen it opened, can give us more satisfaction, without studying or guessing at all. If men will presume to aim at the knowledge of God, without the knowledge of Christ, who is the way and the door; if they have such a high opinion of their own wisdom and penetration, as to suppose they can understand the scriptures without the assistance of his Spirit; or if their worldly wisdom teaches them, that these things are not worth their inquiry; what wonder is it that they should continue to be hid from their eyes? They will one day be stript of all their false pleas, and condemned out of their own mouths.

3dly, The expression, "Thou hast hid," may perhaps farther imply, that those who seek occasion to cavil shall meet with something to confirm their prejudices. When people examine the doctrines or profession of the gospel, not with a candid desire to learn, imitate, and practise, but in order to find some plausible ground for misrepresentation, they frequently have their wish. The wisdom of God has appointed, that difficulties, offences, objections, and stumbling-blocks, should attend, to exercise and manifest the spirits of these wise ones. How largely do they expatiate on the divisions and difference of sentiments which too much prevail among those who are united in the same leading truths. If they can discover an instance of error, folly, or wickedness, of a single person who professes to adhere to the gospel-doctrine, how do they rejoice as if they had found great spoil, charge the faults of a few indiscriminately upon the whole, and labour to shew that every mistake and inadvertence is a necessary consequence of the principles which those maintain who commit it. We do not plead for mistakes and errors of any sort, for weakness in judgment, or inconsistence in practice. But as these things are more or less inseparable from the present state of human nature, they necessarily increase and strengthen the prepossessions of scorners against the truth, and are so far a means of hiding it from their eyes. Yet here again the fault is wholly in themselves; for they seek and desire such occasions of stumbling, and would be disappointed and grieved, if they could not meet with them. But those who are babes in their own eyes, humble, sincere, and teachable, are brought safe through, by a simple dependant spirit, and are made wiser every day by their observation of what passes around them.

Many inferences and advices might be deduced from what has been said. I shall content myself with three.

1. Examine yourselves what understanding and experience you have of the things I mean.

tioned under the first head. So much as you know of these, so far you are christians, and no farther. "A form of godliness without the power" (2 Tim. iii. 5.), is one of the worst characters of the worst times; yet how common in the present day? How many who chuse to be called Christians, reject the testimony which God has given of his Son, deny the efficacy of his grace, speak of the new birth with disdain, as unintelligible and unnecessary, and account all that can be said of the life of faith (though founded upon express scripture, and attested by many witnesses) no better than enthusiastic jargon! But if you are thus minded, however sober your deportment, or professedly benevolent your disposition, though you may be applauded as a pattern of generosity, a philosopher, or a saint, by your acquaintance and neighbours, if the scriptures are true, you can be but as a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal in the sight of God. You would have despised Thomas in your heart, if you had been witness to his joyful exclamation when he worshipped Jesus, and cried, "My Lord, and my God!" John xx. 28. You would have despised Paul as a dark enthusiast, had you heard him say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. Yea, you must have despised Jesus himself, if you had been present at his conference with Nicodemus. Our Lord Jesus is now in heaven, Thomas and Paul have been long dead; you cannot reach them; nor do they stand in your way; therefore, perhaps you are content to speak well of them in general terms. But those who come nearest to their language and spirit are the objects of your scorn and hatred. How then can you pretend to love him, or presume that he loves you? Jesus is worshipped in heaven; how then can you expect to come there? or what pleasure could you find there in your present turn of mind? O, kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish; for in a little time his wrath will burn like fire.

But to every one who understands, embraces, and lives under the influence of these truths, I may safely apply our Lord's words, "Blessed art thou" (Matth. xvi. 17.), however despised by men, or chastened of the Lord; for "flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee;" thou hast assuredly received them from God by his Spirit. He alone is able to cause the light to shine into our dark hearts, "to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6.

2. Do not entertain hard and perplexing thoughts about the counsels of God, either respecting others or yourselves.

1st, With regard to others. It is a frequent difficulty, either thrown in the way of inquirers after truth by the subtilty of Satan or perhaps arising from the natural pride of the human heart, that would be thought able to account for every thing. I say, when they begin to apprehend the gospel-way of salvation, this perplexing question arises, If things are so, what will become of multitudes? What! are all the Heathens, Mahometans, Papists, and even all the Protestants, except the few who adopt these singular sentiments, to be lost? I shall not attempt to conquer this objection by dint of reasoning, but would rather persuade you to direct your reasonings another way. When the same question, for substance, was proposed to our Lord, his answer to those who asked him was, "Strive (each one for yourselves) to enter in at the strait gate," Luke xiii. 23, 24. Take care of yourselves, and leave the cases of others to the Lord. Remember he is God, and therefore just and good.

2dly, With regard to yourselves. Secret things belong to God; your business is with what is revealed. Some put the word of salvation from them perversely, and think, if the Lord designs me for eternal life, he will call me in his own time; till then I will go on in my sins. Those who can reason thus, and take encouragement to persist in wickedness, from the consideration of the power and efficacy of God's grace, do thereby avow themselves to be Satan's willing servants. But he terrifies many on whom he cannot thus prevail, with representing to them, that, let them do what they will, it is all in vain; unless the Lord has chosen them, notwithstanding any good beginnings they may hope he has wrought in them, they will come to nothing at last. It is your business to give all diligence to make your calling sure. If, by a humble waiting upon God, you are enabled to have your conversation according to the gospel, listen not to vain and perplexing reasonings, but commit yourself to the mercy and guidance of the Lord; and he, in his good time, will enable you to see, and to say, that it is not in vain to trust in him. Your path shall be like the advancing light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The Lord has already provided all that you can reasonably desire.

(1.) The means are pointed out, in the use of which you are to be found, and wherein you may expect his blessing. These are chiefly secret prayer, the study of his written word, an attendance on the preached gospel, and free converse (as proper opportunities are afforded) with his believing people. If you continue in the observance of these, and act faithfully to the light you have already received, by breaking off from the evil practices of the world, and watching against those things which you yourselves know to be evil, you will certainly gain ground in light, strength, and comfort. You will see more and more of the glory of the Lord in the glass of the

gospel; and in proportion to your views, you shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." For,

(2.) The promise is sure. What God has said you may assuredly depend on. And what has he said? What, indeed, has he not said for the encouragement of those who are sincerely desirous to seek and serve him? "They that seek shall find," Matth. vii. 7, 8. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," Is. xl. 29. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," Is. xl. 31. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," Is. xliv. 3.

If, therefore, you feel yourself a lost sinner, see a beauty and sufficiency in Jesus, have a hunger and thirst after his righteousness, and are made willing to expect the blessing in his way; you may look upon this as a token for good. Such views and desires as these never are found in any heart till he communicates them. By nature we are averse and contrary to them. Give him the glory of what he has begun; and oppose your temptations, fears, and doubts, with this argument, drawn from your own experience, as the wife of Manoah formerly reasoned: "If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have enabled and encouraged us to call upon him; neither would he at this time have shewn us such things as these," Judges xiii. 23.

SERMON III.

OF THOSE FROM WHOM THE GOSPEL-DOCTRINES ARE HID.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes MATTH. xi. 25.

THE judgments of God are a great deep. He does not give us a full account of his matters; much less can we by searching find out him to perfection; yet if we carefully attend to what he has revealed, and apply his written word with humility and caution to what passes in ourselves, and around us, we may by his grace attain to some considerable satisfaction in things which at first view seem hard to be understood. The subject of my text is of this nature. That God should hide things of everlasting consequence from any person, sounds very harsh; but I hope, when the words are explained, we shall see, that though he acts as a sovereign in his dispensations, his ways are just, and good, and equal.

We have already made an entrance upon this attempt. Besides some general observations in my first discourse, I endeavoured to shew you, in the second, 1. What the things are to which our Lord refers; 2. Where, and in what sense they are hid. I proceed now to consider,

III. From whom they are hid,—the wise and prudent. It will, I think, be readily supposed, that the expression does not mean those who are truly so, and in God's account. He esteems none to be wise and prudent but those who are enlightened with his spiritual wisdom, who now serve and love him in Christ. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning (or, as the word likewise signifies, the head or principal part) of wisdom" (Psalm cxi. 10); and from such as these he hides or keeps back nothing that is profitable for them: on the contrary, that promise is sure, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant," Psalm xxv. 14. When our Lord said, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke xvi. 8.), he did not mean they were so absolutely, for their boasted wisdom is the merest folly, but only that they acted consistently with their own principles. The wise and prudent here are either those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, or those who are generally so reputed by the bulk of mankind. And these two amount to the same: for as the natural wisdom of man springs from the same fountain, self, and is confined to the same bounds, the things of time and sense, in all alike (though there is variety of pursuits within these limits, as tempers and situations differ), men are generally prone to approve and applaud those who act upon their own principles.

We may take notice, then, as a key to this inquiry, that what is accounted wisdom by the world, is not only different from the wisdom of God, but inconsistent with it, and opposite to it. They differ as fire and water, light and darkness; the prevalence of the one necessarily includes the suppression of the other. See this at large insisted on by St. Paul, in the beginning of his first epistle to the Corinthians, the first, second, and third chapters.

Who, then, are the wise and prudent intended in my text? May the Holy Spirit enable every conscience to make faithful application of what shall be offered upon this head.

1. In the judgment of the world, those are wise and prudent persons who are very thoughtful and diligent about acquiring wealth, especially if their endeavours are crowned with remarkable success. If a man thrives (as the phrase is) from small beginnings, and joins house to house, and field to field, so that he has lands to call after his own name, and large possessions to leave to his children, how is he applauded (though

at the same time envied) by the most who know him! I do not deny, that a proper concern and industry in our secular calling, is both lawful and our duty; and I allow, that the providence of God does sometimes remarkably prosper those who depend on him in the management of their business; but I make no scruple to affirm, that where this is the main concern (as some call it), such wisdom is madness. Such persons are no less idolaters than those who worship stocks and stones. And if the things of God are hid from them, it is surely their own fault: they do not even complain of it as a hardship; they have their choice, their reward, and are satisfied. They are told that these things are in Christ, and there they are content that they should remain: they see no beauty nor suitableness in them, they have no desire after him; he might keep his heaven and truths to himself, if they could always have their fill of the world. They are told that these things are hid in the scriptures, but they have neither leisure nor inclination to search there for them. Their time is taken up with buying and selling, building and planting, &c. O, beware of this wisdom! "What will riches profit you in the day of wrath" (Prov. xi. 4), at death, or judgment? If you live and die in this spirit, you will bemoan your choice when it is too late.

2. Those are accounted wise and prudent, who think they have found a way to reconcile God and the world together. If a man should attempt to fly, or to walk upon the water, he would be deemed a fool. How is it that this endeavour, which is equally impossible (and expressly declared so by our Lord), should be more favourably thought of? The deceitfulness of the heart and the subtilty of Satan concur in this point. You will have a sort of religion, but then you take care not to carry things too far. You are governed by the fear and regard of men. Something you will do to satisfy conscience, but not too much, lest you hurt your interest, disoblige your friends, or draw on yourselves reproach, or a hard name. I must tell you from the word of God, your attempt to halve things is an abomination in his sight. Would it not be treason by the law, to pay the king an outward respect, and yet hold secret correspondence with his enemies? The decisions of the word of God are to the same effect in this instance. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. "Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God," James iv. 4.

3. A man is deemed wise, who has considerable knowledge and curiosity about natural things, and all those subjects which usually bear the name of science; if he can talk of the magnitudes, distances, and motions of the heavenly bodies, can foretell an eclipse, has skill in mathematics, is well read in the history of ancient times, and can inform you what is found in books concerning the folly and wickedness of mankind who lived some thousands of years ago; or if he understands several languages, and can call a thing by twenty different names. It is true, when these attainments are sanctified by grace, they may, in some respects, have their use. But, in general, the best use a believer will or can make of them, is to lay them down at the foot of the cross. When a man, possessed of a great quantity of these pebbles, has his conscience awakened, and his understanding enlightened, he is glad to renounce them all for the pearl of great price, and to adopt the apostle's determination, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. This was the effect when the word of God mightily grew and prevailed, Acts xix. 19. We may at least say, that this kind of wisdom is for the most part dangerous and blinding to the soul.

1st, It tends to feed and exalt self, to make a person something in his own eyes. This we are prone enough to by nature. An increase of unsanctified knowledge adds fuel to the fire.

2dly, It engrosses the time and thoughts. Our minds are narrow, capable of attending to but few things at once; and our span is short, and will hardly admit of many excursions from the main concern. If we were to live to the age of Methuselah, we might pursue some things which at present are highly improper and impertinent, from this consideration alone. A man that is upon an urgent affair of life and death, has no leisure for amusement. Such is our situation. We are creatures of a day. Time is vanishing, and eternity is at stake.

3dly, The delusion here is specious, and not easily discovered. A person with these accomplishments is not always enslaved to money or to sensual pleasures: he therefore pities those who are, and comparing himself with others, supposes he is well employed because his favourite studies are a check upon his appetites, and prevents his selling himself for gold, or running into riot with the thoughtless. Yet an attachment of this sort equally blinds him with respect to his true interest. Will the knowledge of books, or men, or stars, or flowers, purify the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? It is too plain, that the truths of the gospel are hid from none more effectually than from many of this character. None cast a more daring or public slight upon the revealed will of God than some who are admired and applauded on account of their knowledge and learning.

4. Your nice and curious reasoners and

disputers, that will see (as they profess) the bottom of every thing, and trust to their own judgment and inquiries, independent of the Spirit of God, are another sort of wise persons from whom these things are often and justly hid. And this character may be found in many, both learned and unlearned; for many have good natural faculties, who have not had the advantages of learning and education. But this spirit is directly contrary to that simplicity, dependence, and obedience of faith, which the scriptures exhort us to seek after. Its effects are various:

1st, Some (and those not a few) are led to reject the word of God altogether, because it evidently contains many things above and contrary to their vain imaginations. And herein they contradict the most obvious principles of that reason which they lay claim to. A revelation from God can only be thought necessary or probable, but on the supposition that it is to inform us of something which we could not have known without it. Therefore, to pretend to try the scripture-claim to this character by such criteria or marks as we possess beforehand, is the same thing in effect as to determine to reject it without any trial at all.

2dly, When the scriptures, as to the letter, are acknowledged to be true, persons of this turn, presuming themselves sufficient judges of the sense, are helped by their ingenuity to explain away all the sublime doctrines of truth, so as to suit the prejudices and apprehensions of their own carnal minds. This, especially when joined with a smattering of learning, has been the chief source of all the errors and heresies which have pestered the church of God in all ages. This is a principal cause why the depravity of man by nature, the deity and atonement of Christ, the operations of the Holy Spirit, and all the doctrines of grace, have been denied by men wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, though evidently contained in the book which they profess to receive as of divine inspiration.

3dly, Even where the doctrines of grace have been notionally received, the same spirit of wisdom can still find occasion to work. When there is more knowledge in the head than experience in the heart, many and various are the evils that often ensue. Disputes and hard questions are started, contentions and divisions multiplied, and people are more eager to perplex others than to edify themselves. Thus the name and counsels of God are profaned by an irreverent curiosity, and the clear, express declarations of his will darkened by words without knowledge. When this natural wisdom puts on a spiritual appearance, no persons are more fatally deceived, or more obstinately hardened. They think they can learn no more, but are wise enough to teach every one: they neglect the use of God's appointed means themselves, and despise them in others: they are proud, censorious, obstinate, and full of conceit. Take care of Satan at all times, but especially when he would transform himself into an angel of light. There is reason to think the things of God are entirely hid, as to their power and excellence, from some who fondly dream that none are acquainted with them but themselves.

The consideration of this subject may lead to a variety of improvement. It may teach you,

1. What to fear,—A worldly spirit. This in a prevailing degree is inconsistent with a work of grace, and, in whatever degree it obtains, or is indulged, will proportionably retard and abate the light and comfort of our souls. The cares and pleasures of this life are by our Lord compared to thorns (Matthew xiii. 22), unprofitable and painful; they produce no fruit, but they wound and tear. Yea, they are thorns in the eyes (Josh. xxiii. 13), which will prevent the great things of God from being perceived.—A spirit of self-dependence. "Be not wise in your own conceits," Rom. xii. 16. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," 1 Cor. viii. 2. God giveth wisdom to the lowly, but he confounds the devices of the proud. His promises of teaching, leading, and guiding, are made to the meek, the simple, and those who are little in their own eyes.

2. What to pray for,—A simple, child-like temper, that you may come to the word as to the light, and look beyond yourselves for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, without which your most laboured inquiries will only mislead you farther and farther from the truth.

3. How to examine yourselves,—Not by your notions and attainments in knowledge, for these you may have in a considerable degree, and be wholly destitute of true grace. The word of God supposes it possible that persons may have great gifts (1 Cor. xiii. 1—3), flaming zeal, and much success, and yet, having no true love to God, be in his sight no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. But if you would know your state, examine by your prevailing desires. Are your notions of grace effectual to lead you in the path of duty? Do you hunger and thirst for an increase of holiness? Does the knowledge you have of Christ lead you to love and trust him? Are you poor in spirit? You know nothing aright if you know not yourselves.

4. Ye that are believers may see cause to praise the Lord for his dispensations towards you.

1st, Had you been wise in men's esteem, you might have continued fools to the end of your lives. If the Lord has taught you the

secret of them that fear him; if he has shown you the way of salvation; if he has directed your feet in the paths of his commandments; —then you have the true wisdom, which shall be your light through life, and in death your glory. Therefore,

2dly, Be not grieved that ye are strangers to human wisdom and glory. These things which others so highly prize, you may resign contentedly, and say, Lord, it is enough if thou art mine. Nay, you have good reason to praise his wisdom and goodness for preserving you from those temptations which have ensnared and endangered so many.

3dly, Do you desire more of this true wisdom? Seek it in the same way in which you have received the first beginnings. Be frequent and earnest in secret prayer. Study the word of God, and study it not to reconcile and make it bend to your sentiments, but to draw all your sentiments from it, to copy it in your heart, and express it in your conduct. Be cautious of paying too great a regard to persons and parties. One is your master, even Christ. Stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free, and while you humbly endeavour to profit by all, do not resign your understanding to any but to him who is the only wise God, the only effectual and infallible teacher. Compare the experience of what passes within your own breast with the observations you make of what daily occurs around you, and bring all your remarks and experiences to the touch-stone of God's holy word. Thus shall you grow in knowledge and in grace; and, amidst the various discouragements which may arise from remaining ignorance in yourselves or others, take comfort in reflecting that you are drawing near to the land of light, where there will be no darkness at all. Then you shall know as you are known; your love and your joy shall likewise be perfect, and you shall be satisfied with the rivers of pleasure which are before the throne of God, world without end.

SERMON IV.

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL REVELATION, AND WHO ARE FAVOURED WITH IT.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. MATTH. xi. 25

WE proceed now to the more pleasing part of our subject. The great things of the gospel, though hid, are not lost: not hid as in the bottom of the sea; but he who hides them from the wise and prudent, is ready and willing to make them known to every sincere inquirer. This discovery, on the Lord's part, is a revelation, and the character of those who obtain it is expressed by the word *babes*. Of the five particulars I proposed to consider from the text, these two yet remain to be spoken to.

IV. The saving knowledge of divine truth is a revelation. Our Lord uses a parallel expression, when he commends Peter's confession of his faith, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matth. xvi. 17. Peter had Moses and the prophets, so had the scribes and the Pharisees; and after their manner they were diligent in reading and searching them. But that he could acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, when they rejected him, was because the Father had revealed this truth to him, and given him a clearer knowledge of it than he could have received from the written word alone. But it may be proper to inquire into the meaning of this term. What are we here to understand by revelation?

Sometimes revelation is used in an extraordinary sense, as when of old the Lord made known to his servants, the prophets, those doctrines and events, which till then were neither heard nor thought of. Of this we are not now to speak, but of that which is commom to all believers, and necessary to salvation.

Now this revelation supposes the things to be revealed were real and certain before, but unknown, and not to be found out any other way.

Revelation is not the creation or invention of something new, but the manifestation o what was till then unknown. The great things of eternity, the glorious truths of the gospel, are real and certain in themselves already, and do not begin to be when we begin to be acquainted with them: yet till God is pleased to reveal them to the heart, we have no more spiritual and effective knowledge of them than if they were not. Ignorance of things very near to us, and in which we are nearly concerned, may be from two causes:

1. From a want of light. Nothing can be perceived in the dark. If you are in a dark room, though it is richly adorned and furnished, all is lost to you. If you stand in a dark night upon the top of a hill that commands a fine prospect, still you are able to see no more than if you were in a valley. Though you were in a dangerous place, with pitfalls and precipices, and thieves and murderers all around you, still you might imagine yourself in safety, if you had no light with you.

2. It may be from some hindrance or obstruction between you and the object. Thus your dearest friend, or greatest enemy, might

be within a few yards of you, and you know nothing of it, if there was a wall between you.

These comparisons may in some measure represent our case by nature. God is near; "in him we live, move, and have our being." Eternity is near; we stand upon the brink of it. Death is near, advancing towards us with hasty strides. The truths of God's word are most certain in themselves, and of the utmost consequence to us. But we perceive none of these things; we are not affected by them, because our understandings are dark, and because thick walls of ignorance, prejudice, and unbelief, stand before the eyes of the mind, and keep them from our view. Even those notions of truth which we sometimes pick up by hearing and reading, are but like windows in a dark room; they are suited to afford an entrance to the light when it comes, but can give no light of themselves.

I think, therefore, we may conclude, that God's revealing these things to us only signifies his effecting such a change in us by his Holy Spirit, as disposes and enables us to behold them. He sends a divine light into the soul; and things begin to appear so plain, we wonder at our former stupidity, that we could not perceive them before. By the power of his Spirit, he breaks down the walls which prevented and confined our views; and a new unthought-of prospect suddenly appears before us. Then the soul sees its danger: "I thought myself secure; but I find I am in the midst of enemies. Guilt pursues me behind; fear, and the snare, and the pit, are before me; which way shall I turn?" Then it perceives its mistake: "While my views were confined, I thought there was nothing but the span of life to take care of; but now I see a boundless eternity beyond it." It obtains a glimpse likewise of the glories of the better world, of the beauties of holiness, of the excellency of Jesus. This light is at first faint and imperfect, but grows stronger by the use of appointed means; and as it is increased, every thing appears with a stronger evidence.

We may more particularly illustrate this work of the Holy Spirit, as it influences those leading faculties of the soul, the understanding, affections, and will. By nature, the will is perverse and rebellious, and the affections alienated from God: the primary cause of these disorders lies in the darkness of the understanding. Here, then, the change begins. The Spirit of God enlightens the understanding, by which the sinner perceives things to be as they are represented in the word of God; that he is a transgressor against the divine law, and on this account obnoxious to wrath; that he is not only guilty, but depraved and unclean, and utterly unable either to repair past evil, or to amend his own heart and life. He sees that the great God might justly refuse him mercy; and that he has no plea to offer in arrest of judgment. This discovery would sink him into despair, if it went no farther; but, by the same light which discovers him to himself, he begins to see a suitableness, wisdom, and glory, in the method of salvation revealed in the gospel. He reads and hears concerning the person, sufferings, and offices of Christ, in a very different manner from what he did before: and as, by attending to the word and ministry, his apprehensions of Jesus and his understanding become more clear and distinct, a spiritual hope takes place and increases in his soul; and the sure effects of this is, he feels his love drawn forth to him, who so loved him as to die for his sins. Beholding, by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, as bleeding and dying upon the cross; and knowing for whom, and on what account, he suffered, he learns to hate, with a bitter hatred, those sins which nailed him there. The amazing love of Christ constrains him to account all things which he formerly valued, as dross and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of his Saviour. Nor does his faith stop here; he views him who once suffered and died, rising triumphant from the tomb, and ascending into heaven in the character of the representative, friend, and forerunner of his people. Having such a High-Priest, he is encouraged to draw near to God, to claim an interest in the promises, respecting the life that now is, and that which is to come. Thus possessing, in the beginnings of grace, an earnest of the glory that shall be revealed, a real, universal, abiding change necessarily takes place in the affections. Now old things are passed away, and all things become new: the soul no longer cleaves willingly to the dust, or can be satisfied with earthly things, but thirsts for communion with God, and an increase of holiness. Sin is no longer consented to, or delighted in, but is opposed and watched against; and every unallowed deviation from the will of God excites the sincerest grief and humiliation, and leads to renewed application to the blood and grace of Jesus for pardon and strength. Thus the will likewise is brought into an unreserved subjection and surrender to the power of Christ, and acts as freely in his service as it once did against him. For that what is termed *the freedom of the human will* should consist in a suspended indifference between good and evil, is a refinement, which, however admired and applauded by many, is equally contrary both to sound reasoning and to universal experience. The will, in all persons and cases, is determined by the present dictates of the understanding, and the bent of the affections.

By ascribing so much to the Spirit of God, I do not mean, as you may perceive by what I have just now said, to exclude his holy word, or preached gospel. All these truths and

prospects are already contained in the word of God; but without the light of the Spirit they are not discerned. They are propounded to you in the public ministry. We testify again and again the things which we have seen and heard of the word of life: and when we are in some measure affected with their evidence, we are ready to wonder how any of you can possibly avoid perceiving them; till we remember how it was with ourselves, and then we know, by our own experience, that we must preach, and you hear in vain, unless the Lord is pleased to open your hearts. But observe,

1. The Spirit of God teaches and enlightens by his word as the instrument. There is no revelation from him, but what is (as to our perception of it) derived from the scriptures. There may be supposed illuminations, and strong impressions upon the mind, in which the word of God has no place or concern; but this alone is sufficient to discountenance them, and to prove that they are not from the Holy Spirit. For,

2. The scriptures are the appointed rule and test, by which all our searches and discoveries, all our acquisitions in religious knowledge, must be tried. If they are indeed from God, they will stand this trial, and answer to the word as face answers to face in a glass, but not otherwise. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. If those who despise all claims to the influence of the Spirit of God, as enthusiasm, had not been frequently informed, that we expect, we acknowledge, no internal revelation, but by the medium of the word of God, and agreeable to it, they would be less inexcuseable in repeating the charges of folly and infatuation, which they ignorantly fix upon the work of the Spirit, and all who profess a dependence on it. To those who are indeed candid and sincere inquirers after truth, what has been said upon this part of our subject, will, I hope, suggest the propriety of two directions. From hence learn,

1st, To set a high value upon the word of God. All that is necessary to make you wise to salvation is there, and there only. In this precious book you may find a direction for every doubt, a solution of every difficulty, a promise suited to every circumstance you can be in. There you may be informed of your disease by sin, and the remedy provided by grace. You may be instructed to know yourselves, to know God and Jesus Christ, in the knowledge of whom standeth eternal life. The wonders of redeeming love, the glories of the Redeemer's person, the happiness of the redeemed people, the power of faith, and the beauty of holiness, are here represented to the life. Nothing is wanting to make life useful and comfortable, death safe and desirable, and to bring down something of heaven upon earth. But this true wisdom can be found no where else. If you wander from the scriptures, in pursuit either of present peace, or future hope, your search will end in disappointment. This is the fountain of living waters: if you forsake it, and give the preference to broken cisterns of your own devising, they will fail you when you most need them. Rejoice, therefore, that such a treasure is put into your hand: but rejoice with trembling. Remember this is not all you want: unless God likewise gives you a heart to use it aright, your privilege will only aggravate your guilt and misery. Therefore remember,

2dly, The necessity of prayer. For though the things of nearest consequence to you are in the Bible, and you should read it over and over, till you commit the whole book to your memory; yet you will not understand, or discern the truth as it is in Jesus, unless the Lord the Spirit shews it to you. The dispensation of the truth is in his hand; and without him all the fancied advantages of superior capacity, learning, criticism, and books, will prove as useless as spectacles to the blind. The great encouragement is, that this infallible Spirit, so necessary to guide us into the way of peace, is promised to all who sincerely ask it. This Spirit Jesus is exalted to bestow: and he has said, "Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast him out." Therefore water your reading with frequent prayer. We proceed to,

V. The characters of those persons who succeed in their inquiries, and have the things of God savingly revealed to them; they are called *babes*.

1. They are for the most part babes in the world's esteem. They are despised by the wise and prudent for their weak capacities, small attainments, and their seeming insignificance in common life. But the Lord does not overlook any on these accounts. He is no respecter of persons. In the blessings of his common providence, those which are more immediately from his own hand, such as air and light, health and strength, the faculties of sight and hearing, &c. he bestows as freely, and in as great perfection, to the poor as to the rich, to the ignorant as to the learned. And thus it is with respect to his grace. Our incapacity is founded in our nature, and is common to all, and not in any particular circumstances. He is as ready to save the mean as the noble. Many of the great and wise are offended at this. As they engross the earth, they would willingly engross heaven also to themselves. But the Lord has appointed otherwise; and it has been one reproach constantly attending the gospel, that few but the common people (Mark xii. 37. John vii. 48, 49.) have thought it worth their notice.

2. They are babes in their own esteem.

Not that some are more humble than others by nature, and therefore the Lord gives them a preference on that account, for by nature we are all alike, equally destitute of the smallest good; but the expression teaches us, that those to whom the Lord is pleased to reveal these things, he first empties and humbles, strips them of all ground of boasting, and brings them to a dependence on himself. The true believer is frequently compared to a little child; and it is easy to trace an instructive resemblance.

1st, A child or babe has little knowledge, and its capacity and powers are as yet very feeble. All whose understandings have been spiritually enlightened will acknowledge themselves children in this respect. The little they know convinces them of their ignorance. They are convinced that their views of things are faint, partial, confused; that their judgments are weak; that if the Lord prevents it not, they are very liable to be imposed on by the subtilty of Satan, and the treachery of their own hearts. They feel that they have not in themselves sufficiency to think a good thought.

2dly, A child is teachable. Conscious of their own ignorance, they listen to all about them, and think every one is qualified to teach them something. Among men none are truly teachable, but those who know they need to be taught. The natural man, if possessed of any advantages, thinks every one needs his help. The humble christian gives this proof, that the confession he is ready to make of his ignorance is genuine, and from his heart, that he is desirous to learn from all. He is swift to hear, slow to speak, and open to conviction. Though he will not assent to every thing he hears without proof or examination, yet he is disposed to receive instruction, and thankful to those by whom he is profited. He is fearful of being mistaken, of giving way to prejudices, and therefore gladly improves every means of information.

3dly, A child is simple and dependent. He does not reason, but implicitly receives what he is told by his parents, or those whom he thinks wiser than himself. Such a resignation, indeed, the believer dares not make of his understanding to any men, however highly he may esteem them in the main; for he has learned from the word of God, not to put his trust in man: but this is the desire of the renewed heart, with respect to the teaching of God's word and Spirit. He allows no reasoning or questioning here; nor will he say with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" It is enough for him that God has said it, and is able to make it good. This is a happy temper. In this way innumerable difficulties that arise from appearances and sophisms are avoided; and the mind, by faith, steers in safety across the immense ocean of conjectures and opinions, which disputants and reasoners, essaying to do, are sunk and overpowered. It is true, there are various degrees of this simplicity; and in those who possess it in a larger measure, there is a remaining principle of pride and unbelief, which costs them much prayer and many conflicts to subdue. But this, in some degree, is essential to the character of those who are taught of God; they desire and endeavour to submit wholly to his guidance and will in all things.

Here, then, is a proper topic for self-examination. Let each one ask his heart, Have I this simple, child-like disposition?

If you have, if it is the desire of your sou. to be taught of God, if his word is your rule, if you depend on his Spirit to teach you all things, and to lead you as it were by the hand, sensible that, unless you are thus led and guided, you shall certainly go astray; be thankful for this, accept it as a token for good. You were not always so: there was a time when you were wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own sight. You have good warrant to hope that the Lord, who has already taught you to depend on himself, will shew you all that is necessary for you to know.

But if this is not the case, if you lean to your own understanding, what wonder is it that you are still walking in darkness and uncertainty? Will you say, I have read the Bible diligently; I have taken no small pains to examine things, to see which of the many divisions that obtain among Christians is possessed of the truth; but I am still at a loss: surely, if the tenets some plead for had been in the scriptures, I should have found them there? I answer, without detracting from your sagacity or your sincerity, your case is easily accounted for from the verse which we are upon, if your inquiries are not conducted in a humble dependence upon the Spirit of God. Too many instances we could produce of men, who having laboured for years in what seems one of the most laudable undertakings, the explaining the scriptures for the use of others, have at last been in a remarkable degree unsettled themselves; and the only visible fruits their reading and industry have afforded, have been error, invective, and dissatisfaction; so that their labours have been an exemplification of the former part of our text, a proof in point how entirely the things of God are often hid from the wise and prudent.

You that are seeking the Lord, and are little in your own eyes, rejoice that the dispensation of grace is in his hands. If men had the disposal of it, you might perhaps have been overlooked. We should have been ready to have accepted the fair-spoken young man who accosted our Lord with so much outward respect, and had so much to say in his own behalf (Mark x. 20); and probably we should have left the thief upon the cross to perish like

a wretch as he deserved. "But the Lord seeth not as man seeth," 1 Sam. xvi. 7. "His ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts," Isa. lv. 7, 9. Therefore there is encouragement for the meanest and the vilest. He has excluded none but those who exclude themselves. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation! Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

SERMON V.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE ASSERTED AND ILLUSTRATED.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. MATTH. xi 26

THAT the doctrine in the preceding verse is true in fact, is sufficiently evident from common observation. The greatest part of those whom the world esteems wise and prudent, and all to a man who think themselves so, pay but small regard to the truths of the gospel. They are hid from their eyes, and revealed to babes, to those whom they despise on account of their ignorance and insignificance. And if a few who are favoured with considerable advantages in point of genius, education, or rank, do receive the truth in the love of it, they have been at least taught that they are no better than babes, and are glad to count all outward things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

If we could give no other reason for this dispensation of grace than that which is assigned in our text, it ought to be satisfactory, and would be so, if it was not for the pride of our hearts. Surely that which seems good in the sight of God, must be holy, and wise, and good in itself. How vain and presumptuous is blinded man, who would dare to reply against his Maker, to charge his holiness with injustice, his wisdom with mistake, his goodness with partiality! All their vain cavils will be silenced at the great day, when the secrets of all hearts are opened, and God will be justified when he condemns. However, though we dare not venture too far into the depths of the divine counsels, yet, from the light he has afforded us in his word, we may, in our feeble manner, assert and prove that his ways are just and equal; and, besides the argument of his sovereignty, that so it has pleased him, he has been pleased to favour us with some of the reasons why it has so pleased him. And this is the subject I propose to lead your meditations to from these words. May his Spirit assist me, that I may not darken counsel by words without knowledge!

Let us begin with inquiring, What might be his principal ends in sending his Son into the world, that we might have life through him? These, I apprehend, were chiefly two

1. The redemption and complete salvation of all who believe. All mankind are by nature in the same state of sin and misery. But we are told, that at the great day there will be an unspeakable difference in the circumstances between some and others. Many will then stand trembling at his left hand, to whom the King shall say, "Depart." But those on the right hand will hear those joyful words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." If you ask, To what is this difference primarily owing? The answer is provided: "Jesus loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood; he redeemed them out of every nation, and people, and language; they came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne." It was then for their sakes, who should be hereafter found at the right hand of God, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

2. But besides this, God had another and a still higher end in the work of redemption, namely, the manifestation of his own glory. It was unspeakable love to us that he provided the means of salvation at all; and we cannot wonder, much less ought we to complain, that in justice to himself he appointed such means, and such a way, as that all the praise and glory of the contrivance should in the end redound to himself alone. In order to this, it was necessary that the following things should be manifested with the fullest evidence.

1st, The greatness of man's depravity, guilt, and misery; that it was not a small thing, but a case worthy the interposition of almighty power and infinite grace.

2dly, The utter insufficiency of man to relieve himself; that so God might have the whole honour of his recovery, and we might be for ever debtors to his free undeserved mercy.

3dly, That whereas there are, to outward appearance, a great variety of characters among mankind, it was necessary the dispensation of his grace should be so conducted as to shew, that no case was too hard for his power, or too low and miserable for his compassion and condescension.

Upon these grounds we may see something of his wisdom in the methods he has appointed, and in the subjects of his choice; why it has seemed good in his sight, to hide these things from the wise and prudent, and to reveal

them unto babes; for such reasons as these:—1. To stain the pride of all human glory; 2. To exclude every pretence of boasting; 3. That there might be a ground of hope provided for the vilest and meanest; and, 4. That the salvation of believers might be sure, and not subject to miscarry.

I. In the first place, then, the Lord of hosts hath proposed it, "to stain the pride of all human glory," Isaiah xxiii. 9. How much men are disposed to admire their own wisdom, learning, and fancied accomplishments, is sufficiently obvious. But now the pride of all this glory is stained, inasmuch as it is proved by experience to be utterly useless in the most important concerns. One man has talents to rule a kingdom, but is himself a slave to the vilest lusts and passions. Another has courage to face death in a field of battle, yet, with regard to religion, is a mere coward: overawed by the feeble breath of the multitude, he is both ashamed and afraid to practise what his conscience convinces him is his duty. Another almost pretends to count the number of the stars, and to call them all by their names; yet has no more thought of the God that made the heavens and the earth, than the beasts that perish. Another delights in books and languages which few can understand but himself; nothing so false or foolish but he accounts it worth his study, if it has but the stamp of antiquity to recommend it; only the book of God (though much more ancient than all his fables), because it may be read in plain English, is thrown by as unworthy his notice. Another, who professes to be scripture-wise, perverts the scriptures, and abuses his own reason, to establish the most absurd errors, or to overturn the plainest truths. Another amuses himself with setting forth the praises of virtue and morality, while his own conduct furnishes a standing proof, either of the weakness of his scheme, or the insincerity of his heart. Time would fail to recount all the achievements of these wise and prudent men. But behold the pride of them all stained! In the midst of all their acquisitions and inventions, they are strangers to God, to themselves, and to peace; they are without Christ, and without hope: those things which alone are of real importance, are hid from their eyes. Here the desperate depravity and deceitfulness of the heart are manifested, to the glory of God; and it is clearly seen, that if he does not interpose to save, men are wholly unable to save themselves.

II. To exclude boasting. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." As the apostle speaks in another place, "If Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory" (Rom. iv. 2.): so, if men were saved, either in whole or in part, by their own wisdom and prudence, they might in the same degree ascribe the glory and praise to themselves. They might say, My own power and wisdom gave me this; and thus God would be robbed of the honour due to his name. But now this is prevented. The word of the Lord is, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord," Jeremiah ix. 23, 24. For whatever outward advantages some may seem to possess, as to the things of God, they stand altogether upon a level with the meanest. These things cannot be understood by any sagacity on our parts, but must be revealed by the Father of lights. What could be done in this way, you may collect from St. Paul's representation in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Many of the Heathens were eminent for wisdom and abilities, and made great proficiency in science; but with regard to the knowledge of God, the result of all their researches was error, superstition, and idolatry: professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and their disquisitions had no other effect than to leave them without excuse. Their practice (as will always be the case) was correspondent to their principles; and in the midst of a thousand refinements in theory, they were abandoned to the grossest and most detestable vices. If it be said, These had not the light of revelation, we may observe the same or similar effects where the gospel is known. With this superior light, men are still equally vain in their imaginations; and though they do not pay an outward and formal worship to stocks and stones, they are gross idolaters; for they serve, love, and trust the creature more than the Creator. When there is a difference, it is owing to grace, and grace is acknowledged. Such will readily say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise," Psal. cxv 1. Thus all pretence to boasting is effectually excluded; and he that can glory upon good grounds, must glory only in the Lord.

If it should be supposed that this representation of things tends to discourage a diligent and serious inquiry after truth, I answer, When rightly understood, it will have just the contrary effect. What can be more suited to excite diligence, than to point out the method in which it will assuredly be crowned with success? You cannot succeed without the light and assistance of the Holy Spirit; but if conscious of this, and aware of your own insufficiency, you will seek his direction and guidance by humble prayer, it shall be afforded you. If you know not this, you will certainly be wearied in the end by repeated disappointments; but if you depend upon his teaching and co-operation in the use of the means he has appointed, your knowledge shall advance as the growing light."

III. This method of the divine procedure opens a door of hope to the vilest and the meanest. Let not any be cast down on account of any peculiar incapacity or difficulty in their case. If none but the wise and the learned, the rich, and those who are esteemed well-behaved and virtuous, could be saved, or if these stood in a fairer way for it than others, the greatest part of mankind might give up hope, and sit down in despair at once. But the case is exactly the reverse. It is true, the persons I am speaking of are not the worse for these distinctions, whenever they are sensible how vain and insufficient they are, and betake themselves as poor, helpless, miserable, blind, and naked, to flee for refuge to the mercy of God in Christ. But, alas! their supposed qualifications too often harden them to reject the counsel of God against themselves. They think themselves whole, and therefore see not the necessity or value of the physician. You who are sensible you have nothing of your own to trust to, take encouragement; the Lord has suited his gospel to your circumstances.

1. Are ye poor? The Lord Jesus Christ has sanctified the state of poverty by taking it on himself. He had not where to lay his head. He will not therefore despise you on this account. Only pray that you may likewise be poor in spirit. He looks through all outward distinctions, and often passes by a palace to make his presence and power known in a mud-walled cottage. Perhaps he appointed this state in mercy to your souls, that you might not be distracted with many things, nor take up with a portion in this world. You cannot be in a lower or more afflicted state than Lazarus, who, while he lay neglected at the rich man's gate, oppressed with want, and full of sores, was a child of God, and the charge of angels.

2. Are you ignorant? If you cannot read, you miss indeed a considerable advantage which you might derive from the perusal of his good word, and I would wish you to attain it if practicable. If not, give so much more diligent attention to the preaching of the gospel; entreat others to read the scriptures to you; but especially pray. The Lord can teach you without a book, and make up for every defect. It is very possible for you to attain to know and love God, to love your neighbour, to rejoice in Christ, to keep his precepts, to be content with your station, to live by faith, and to die with comfort, though you cannot distinguish one letter from another. The prophet Isaiah, in the prospect of gospel-times, gives a description of the way of salvation, which is peculiarly suited for your comfort. "And a high way shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein," Isa. xxxv. 8.

3. Have you been notorious, open sinners? Then you are in the less danger of trusting to your own righteousness. And as to the rest, if you are sick of sin, if you sincerely desire to be freed, as well from the power as from the guilt of it, you stand as fair for salvation as the most sober and regular person upon the earth. St. Paul, speaking to those who had been partakers of the saving grace of God, after he had made an enumeration of the blackest sins which man can be guilty of, adds, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11.

IV. In this way the salvation of believers is sure. If it depended on any thing in man, it might miscarry. Man's boasted wisdom is soon changed. A few hours of a fever, a small blow on the head, may change a wise man into a fool. "But it is of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed." Rom. iv. 16. Adam had a stock of wisdom, yet when he was trusted with his own happiness, he could not preserve it. But the second Adam is all-sufficient. Our dependence is upon him. To those who are babes, he is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and all that they want. If this concern had been left to the wisdom of man, it is most probable that Christ would have lived and died in vain, without a single real disciple. But now the dispensation of grace is in his hands, we are sure that some will believe in him; and we are likewise sure, that those who truly do so shall never be ashamed of their hope.

Now, from what has been said,

1. Inquire what is the temper of your minds with regard to this appointment. Our Lord rejoiced in it as the wise and holy will, the good pleasure of his heavenly Father. If you are displeased at it, is it not a proof that you have not the mind which was in Christ Jesus? If God wills one thing, and you will another, where must the contention end? To what purpose, or with what pretence can you use that expression in the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done," when in effect your hearts rise with enmity against it? This is one topic from whence we may confirm the declaration of scripture, that man by nature is not only a transgressor of the law, but an enemy, yea enmity itself, against God, Rom. viii. 7. They may pay some profession of regard to the power that made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water, while they worship they know not what, according to their own vain and dark imaginations. But the attributes and characters of God revealed in scripture, his holiness, justice, truth, and sovereignty, they cannot bear. They are enemies to the declared strictness of his moral government, and enemies to the methods by which he has proposed to communicate his grace. But he is God, and who can controul him?

Who can say unto him, What hast thou done? You must either submit to his golden sceptre in time, or his rod of iron will fall upon you for ever.

2. Does it not appear from hence, that the doctrine of free sovereign grace is rather an encouragement to awakened and broken-hearted sinners than otherwise? If you are most unworthy of mercy, and destitute of every plea, should you not be glad to hear, that the Lord does not expect worthiness in those whom he saves, but that he himself has provided the only plea which he will accept, and a plea which cannot be over-ruled, the righteousness and mediation of his well-beloved Son?

SERMON VI.

OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. MATTH. xi. 27.

THE two preceding verses have led us to consider grace (if I may so speak) in the unfathomable depths of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God. In this verse our Lord calls us to the contemplation of his own glorious person, authority, and fulness. In him grace is treasured up as in a repository for communications, to be dispensed to needy perishing sinners.

When an ambassador is deputed from an earthly prince, to transact some business of great importance, he produces his commission and authority, without which all he could propose would be little regarded; and those who are most honoured and attended to are entrusted with full powers, that is, with a liberty to act and propose as occasions offer, without farther instructions, and with full security that the king will ratify and confirm whatever they agree to, in the same manner as if he had done it in his own person. Thus (if we may presume to compare small things with great) our Lord Jesus Christ, the great messenger of the Father's love, before he invites every weary, heavy-laden sinner to come to him, with a gracious assurance that he will receive, and pardon, and save them all, he condescends in this verse (as it were) to open his commission, to instruct us in his own personal dignity, and to communicate to us the example and unlimited authority which he has received from God to treat with rebels. He knows what hearts of unbelief we have; how greatly an awakened conscience is terrified with guilt; how busy Satan is to urge us to question either his ability or his willingness to save: and therefore he would leave nothing undone that might encourage us to come to him, and find rest for our souls. May his gracious Spirit enable me to speak aright, and so open your hearts to understand what may be said upon this high subject, that we may have joy and peace in believing!

The words contain a threefold declaration:

1. Of his person: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son."

2. Of his authority: "All things are delivered to me of my Father."

3. Of his office, summarily intimated in the expression, "He to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

To treat these points in their proper extent would be a subject more than equal to the abilities and life of man. Much would be left unsaid at last. We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. This is a theme fit for an angel's tongue: the most exalted angel, or all the angels in heaven, would be unable to comprehend it, for it is infinite, as our text declares: "None knows the Son, but the Father." Here we are too prone to think highly of our own knowledge; but when we arrive in yonder world of light, to see him *as he is*, we shall be ashamed of the highest conceptions we had of him, and of our most laboured attempts to express them, while we were imprisoned in this distant land. Then we shall say, with the queen of Sheba, "Behold, the half (the thousandth part) was not told us." In the mean time he is pleased to accept our imperfect stammerings, to assist our feeble inquiries, and does not disdain (as he justly might) to hear us take his name into our polluted lips.

I. The inconceivable dignity of his person is pointed out by two expressions:

1. "No man" (or rather, as it might be rendered here and in many other places, No one*) knoweth the Father, but the Son." No one—

1st, Not the wisest man in a state of nature. Various degrees of knowledge there are amongst the sons of men. There is a great difference between man and man; between one who knows not his letters, or any thing beyond the bounds of his own village, and another who has a large acquaintance with arts and sciences, history and languages, and has surveyed the manners and boundaries of many nations. But with regard to the knowledge of Christ, the philosopher and the shepherd, the king and the beggar, are just upon a level. Of two blind men, one may know many things more than the other, but with regard to the knowledge of light and colours, they will be both ignorant alike.

Some of you perhaps think yourselves wiser than many of your neighbours. But I can-

* Οὐδεὶς.

not too often remind you, that if you know not Christ, all your wisdom is folly, and you will find it so at last.

2dly, Neither do his own people know him in the sense of the text. Some knowledge of him indeed they have, which is their differencing character from the world. But how small a portion! That they know him a little is plain, because they love him and trust him; but how little, is plain likewise, because their love is so faint, and their trust so feeble. Their doubts, fears, complaints, and backslidings, are so many mournful proofs that they are but poorly acquainted with him, and sufficiently evidence that a great part of what we account our knowledge, is not real and experimental, but notional only. The literal sense of what we read concerning Jesus is attainable by study and human teaching; but the spiritual import can only be received from him who teaches the heart, who increases it in us by the various exercises and dispensations we pass through; and the best have much more to learn than they have already attained. There are indeed happy moments when he manifests himself to the eye of faith, in his glory and in his love, as he did to Peter on the mount, and to Thomas, when a sight of his wounds conquered his unbelief, and made him, in a transport of joy, cry out, "My Lord, and my God." But these visits, though they have a powerful influence to conquer sin and fear, are transient; and when the cause is withdrawn, there is a proportionable abatement in the effect. The knowledge of Christ, in the present life, may be compared to the knowledge which a shepherd has of the sea, from having viewed it from the top of a cliff. In a sense, it may be said he has seen the sea; but how little has he seen in comparison of what lies beyond the reach of his eye! How inadequate is such a prospect to give him an idea answerable to the length, and breadth, and depth of the immense ocean! Nay, farther,

3dly, The glorified saints and holy angels, who behold as much of his glory as creatures can bear, do not know him as he is. They are filled with his power and love. He comprehends them, but they cannot him. A vessel cast into the sea, can but receive according to its capacity. Thus are they filled with his fulness till they can hold no more; but his glory still remains infinite and boundless. The glorious seraphim, therefore, are represented as hiding their faces with their wings, unable to bear the splendour of his presence. For,

4thly, "None knows the Son but the Father." This proves his divinity. God only knows himself. The Son is his eternal Word, his eternal Wisdom, and therefore beyond the highest reach of finite understanding.

2. "None knows the Father but the Son." Here I might repeat the former particulars. God has made something known of himself in his works, much in his word, more still in his grace. All men have some faint perceptions of his power and presence. He manifests himself to his own family below, still more to his family above; yet, after all, he is said to dwell in light which no man can approach. None knows him but the Son, and he knows him perfectly, knows the incomprehensible God; therefore he is God himself. As he said to Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," John xvi. 9.

Now, if we had no other proof of this doctrine but the passage before us, since this is the declaration of the true and faithful witness, it should be accepted as decisive. But as this is the great mystery of godliness, the pillar and ground of truth, the foundation of all our hopes, I shall take this opportunity to confirm it more largely from other concurrent testimonies of scripture.

By the Son, I mean the person who spake these words: he who was foretold by the prophets: who in the fulness of time came into the world; who, with respect to his divine nature, is called "the Word" (John i. 1), and, with respect to his human nature, was born of the Virgin Mary: he who was known upon earth by the name of Jesus; whose history is related by the evangelists; who suffered a shameful and accursed death upon the cross, without the gates of Jerusalem. Of him we affirm, "That he was, and is, the true God, and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. In proof of this, besides what has been already said, let the following particulars be considered,

1st, That the proper and peculiar titles of God are attributed to him frequently in the scriptures; so frequently, that it would be a very long task to transcribe them all. Let a few, the application of which to Christ is express and indisputable, suffice for a specimen: "The Word was God" (John i. 1): "His name shall be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us" (Matth. i. 23): "Jehovah our Righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6): "The mighty God," Isa. ix. 6. In the same style he speaks of himself by his servants the prophets and apostles: "Thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Is. liv. 5): "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Is. xlv. 22): "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the Almighty," Rev. i. 8, 11.

Amidst the variety of testimonies which might be adduced to this purpose, there are two which are peculiarly observable. The Psalmist expresses the majesty, power, and immutability of God, in these sublime terms: "Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou

shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Psal. cii. 25—27. Surely none can deny but this ascription must be incommunicably due to the Almighty; yet the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. i. 10—12.) applies these words directly to the Son of God. The other passage I intend is the vision of Isaiah, recorded in the sixth chapter; which not only proves the point in hand, but irrefragably establishes the doctrine of the Trinity. For the Lord of hosts, whom Isaiah saw and heard, is affirmed by St. John to have been the Son (John xii. 41.), by St. Paul to have been the Holy Ghost, Acts xxviii. 25. Isaiah, therefore, had a manifestation of what was afterwards in explicit words set forth to the faith of the church, "that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one," 1 John v. 7.

2dly, His works upon earth were such as necessarily suppose a divine power. Who can controul the elements (Mark iv. 39.), raise the dead (John xi. 43.), command the devils (Luke iv. 36.), search the heart, and forgive sin (Mark ii.), but God alone? If it should be said, that many of his servants and followers wrought miracles equal to his by a delegated power, and therefore this argument is not conclusive; I answer, There is an apparent difference in the manner of their working, which proves the disparity between them and him. They could do nothing but in his name, and by his power; they usually addressed themselves to him by prayer, and always ascribed the praise and glory to him, Acts iii. 12—16. But his power was independent, sovereign, and unlimited: "he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." At the breath of his rebuke, the raging tempest and the boisterous seas were instantly hushed into a perfect calm. The deaf heard his voice, and the dead came forth from their graves, at the first call.

3dly, His works of office can be performed by none but God. This might be proved concerning each of the offices he exercises in consequence of his high character as Mediator between God and man; but I shall speak only of two.

(1.) It is his office to keep his believing people in this present evil world. To act the part of a shepherd (Matth. ii. 6. ποιμανει) towards them, to supply their wants of every kind, to direct their steps, to controul their enemies, to over-rule all things for their good, and to be a very present help in every time of trouble; to execute this important charge, it is necessary that his knowledge, his compassion, his power, and his patience, must be boundless. His eye must be every moment upon all their cases at once; his ear must be incessantly open to receive the prayers of all people, nations, and languages; his arm must be continually stretched out to support so many that stand, to raise up so many that fall, to afford seasonable and suitable supplies, at the same instant, to the distresses and temptations of millions. If this is the office he has undertaken, and if he is acknowledged sufficient and faithful in the discharge of it, what more undeniable evidence can be given, that he has all the attributes we can conceive as essential and peculiar to the Godhead? The provocations, defects, and backslidings, of his people, are likewise so numerous, so often repeated, and attended with such black aggravations, that if he was not God, invincible in goodness, unchangeable in purpose, if his mercy was not, as is his majesty, infinite, he would be wearied out, and provoked to cast them off for ever. The great reason why he bore with his people of old, holds equally strong with respect to us: "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii 6.

(2.) The like may be said of the high office, character, and appointment, he has received, to be the Judge of the world, of angels, and of men. For, besides that it is quite incredible, that God, who is jealous of his glory, should intrust this most illustrious prerogative to any mere creature, it seems evident at first sight, that no creature can be possibly qualified for the discharge of it. To the great and final Judge all hearts must be open, all desires known, and every secret disclosed. He must be intimately acquainted with the counsels and plans that lay hid in God from eternity; he must have a sovereign, comprehensive, intuitive view of every event, of every design, that took place within the limits of time and creation; he must have unlimited authority to pronounce the decisive sentence which will fix the everlasting state of all intelligent beings, and uncontrouled power for the immediate and irrevocable execution of his supreme decree. And what higher than this can our most laboured conceptions reach of the Almighty God! If it be said, that Christ will act by a delegated authority, we answer, It is a contradiction to say, that God can delegate his omniscience to a creature; and without this attribute, any assignable measure of wisdom or power would be insufficient. The power and fulness of the Godhead must so reside in the Judge, as justly to denominate him to be "God over all blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 5. And this the scriptures assure us is the case in fact. The man, Christ Jesus, who is appointed the Judge of quick and dead, is so intimately and essentially united to, and inhabited by the Deity (Col. ii. 9.), that he is the proper object of our faith, as the true God, and eternal life.

4thly, The honours he claims from us afford a further argument for his proper divini-

ty. He challenges our supreme love, obedience, trust, and worship: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John xiv. 1.); "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 23.); "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (John v. 23.); "My sheep know my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life" (John x. 27, 28.); "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12.); "I am the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25). If we could suppose an apostle or an angel speaking of himself in terms like these, requiring our unlimited dependence, and directing our hope and love to centre wholly on him, we might justly reject him as a blasphemer. How the apostles understood these expressions, and that they did not mistake our Lord's meaning, is evident from the behaviour of Thomas. He saluted his risen Saviour, "My Lord and my God," John xx. 28. Had his transport of joy carried him too far in giving this ascription to Jesus, he would, doubtless, have corrected him, and provided us with a caution against committing the like fault. For who that has tasted his love, and been made partaker of the power of his resurrection, can avoid adoring him with the utmost homage their words can express, or their hearts conceive!

From hence we may take occasion to observe,

1. His wonderful condescension, that for us, and our salvation, he stooped so low, drew a vail over his eternal glories, and appeared in the form of a servant, to suffer, and to die: "Though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. This was love passing knowledge, to pour out his blood, his life, his soul, for those, who by nature and practice, were enemies and rebels, disobedient to his government, and averse to his grace.

2. What a blessed and glorious hope is set before awakened sinners! Add to the consideration of his person, what we have yet to offer from the word of God concerning his authority and purpose, and say if these truths do not give sufficient encouragement to believe and be saved.

3. How awful must be the case of those who shall be found in final rebellion against him, and die in a state of impenitence and unbelief! Alas! poor obstinate sinners, that have stood out so long, will you still harden your hearts, and stop your ears, and rush (like the thoughtless horse in the battle) upon your own destruction? Do you consider whom you are opposing? "Did ever any harden himself against the Lord and prosper?" Job ix. 4. "Have you an arm like God, or can you thunder with a voice like him?" Job xl. Where will you stand, or what will you say, "when he shall arise to shake terribly the earth? when he shall be revealed in fire, to take vengeance on all that know not God, and obey not the gospel?" 2 Thess. i. 8. O, kiss the Son, throw down your arms, and fall prostrate at his footstool, lest his anger awake, and you perish without hope; for in a little time the great day of his wrath will be revealed, which will burn like "a furnace, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch," Mal. iv. 1. Then will it appear, that those, and those only are blessed, who put their trust in him: "For those who trust in him shall never be ashamed: but when Christ who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4.

SERMON VII.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. MATTH. xi. 27.

WE have spoken something of the dignity and excellence of that Mighty One on whom our help is laid; and are now to consider,

II. The covenant-authority he is intrusted with to manage the great concerns of man's salvation. He is not only infinitely sufficient, but divinely appointed for this great work.

Of this covenant there is express mention in many parts of scripture, to some of which I have referred in the note *. It is styled the covenant of peace, the everlasting, ordered, and sure covenant. The power and efficacy of this covenant respected the future incarnation of our Saviour. He asserted his right, while in the form of a servant, in the words of my text; and to the same purpose are the words of John the Baptist: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath delivered all things into his hands," John iii. 35. But the full manifestation of it was deferred to the time of his resurrection, when, and by which, he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom. i. 4. Hence, before he left his disciples, he assured them, "All power is committed to me in heaven and in earth," Matth. xxviii. 18.

The sum is, that our Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of his divine nature, and his voluntary undertaking in our flesh, to fulfil all righteousness for us, both as to obedience and satisfaction, is exalted in that nature wherein

* Psal. lxxxix. 3, 19.; Prov. viii. 23.; Isaiah xlii. 1, 6. compared with Matth. xii. 18, 21; Isaiah xlix. 8, 9. Zech. vi. 13.

he suffered, to be the sovereign Judge and Lord of all, Phil. ii. 6, 11. He it is now with whom we have to do. The holy God, considered without respect to the covenant of grace, is a consuming fire to sinners; and we cannot stand before him. But now he reveals himself, he dwells as in his temple, in the man Christ Jesus. He has entrusted all his glory, and all grace in his hands: and to him we are to look, on him we are to depend, for all the blessings we need for time and eternity. For "all things are delivered to him of the Father." *All things* is a most comprehensive expression. We may distribute it as referring to all persons, all blessings, and all dispensations.

1. All persons are in his hands. Hence his sublime title, "King of Kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. xix. 16. He doth what he will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth, Dan. iv. 35. Thus Isaiah saw his glory, and spake of him, Isaiah vi. compared with John 12. 41.

1st, He is Lord over his enemies, and those that hate him. He rules them with a rod of iron, and so disposes their designs as to make them (though against their wills) the means and instruments of promoting his own purposes and glory, Psalm ii. 9. They are his servants, even when they rage most against him. He has a bridle in their mouths to check and turn them at his pleasure. He can and often does controul them when they seem most sure of success, and always sets them bounds, which they cannot pass. So he shewed his power over Pharoah of old; that haughty king's resistance only gave occasion for a more glorious display of the greatness and goodness of the God of Israel. So he humbled the pride of Herod, and gave him up, in the midst of his guards, a prey to worms, Acts xii. 23. And thus, sooner or later, all his enemies are brought to lick the dust before him.

2dly, But especially he is Lord of his own people. By nature, indeed, they likewise are his enemies, but he knows them all by name. They have been in a peculiar manner given him by the Father (John xvii. 6.); he accounts them his portion, and he will not lose his own, John x. 15, 16. He knows where to find them, and when to call them; and when his time is come, one word or look from him can disarm them in a moment, and bring them humbly to his feet. How soon did he stop and change the persecuting Saul! Acts ix. When they are thus made willing in the day of his power, he takes them under his special care; and whoso toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. He guides, and guards, and feeds, and strengthens them: he keeps them night and day, waters them every moment, and will not suffer any to pluck them out of his hand, nor will he himself leave them or forsake them, till he has done all that he has spoken to them of. He gives them likewise a new heart and gracious dispositions, suited to the honourable relation he has brought them into; so that they delight in his precepts, and yield him a cheerful, habitual, and universal obedience, from the constraining sense they have received of his inexpressible love.

2. All blessings are at his disposal. Is not this a welcome declaration to awakened souls? What is the blessing you want? Seek to Jesus, and you shall not be disappointed. Hear his gracious invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.—Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live," Is. lv. 1, 3. The promised blessings which he holds in his hands, are the very same that the awakened enlightened conscience must have, and can have only from him.

1st, Pardon. How needful, how valuable is the pardon of sin to those who know what sin is, what it deserves, and what a share they have in it! Such are incapable of taking comfort till they know how God may be reconciled and sin forgiven. These are the persons to whom Jesus says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," Isa. xlv. 22. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Is. xliii. 25.

2dly, Righteousness. By believing in him sinners are not only pardoned, but justified. They are accepted in the beloved, and accounted righteous by his righteousness imputed to them, which we are assured is unto all, and upon all that believe, without any difference or exception, Rom. iii. 22. Hence his people adore him, and glory in him by his name, *The Lord our Righteousness*. In him they possess a righteousness answerable to the demands of the holy law, have confidence and liberty of access to God at present, though conscious of innumerable deficiencies in themselves, and they shall stand with boldness before him in this righteousness, and not be ashamed in the great day of his appearance, when he shall come to judge the world.

3dly, Strength. The forgiveness of sin that is past would little avail, unless there was provision made for a continual supply of needful grace. Without this we shall quickly grow weary, yield to the force of surrounding temptations, till at length the latter end would be worse than the beginning. But now every sincere soul may be freed from this fear. The way of prevention is pointed out, and the success infallibly secured by that one promise, though there are many to the same effect, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," Is. xl. 31.

4thly, Healing. This is often necessary; for the spiritual warfare is not to be maintained long without wounds. Our great enemy is so subtle, so watchful, so well provided

with temptations adapted to every temper and circumstance; and we are so weak, unpractised, and so often remiss and off our guard, that he will at times prevail to bring us into a dark, barren, backsliding state, despoiled of comfort, and oppressed with fears. But see what a good and gracious shepherd we have: hear his comfortable words, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick," Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

5thly, Support under trouble. He has engaged to lead his people safely through fire and through water, Is. xliii. 2. He gives them leave to cast all their care upon him, with an assurance that he careth for them, 1 Pet. v. 7. He has said, All things shall work together for their good (Rom. viii. 28); that his grace shall be sufficient for them (2 Cor. xii. 9); and that in good time he will bruise Satan under their feet (Rom. xvi. 20); make them more than conquerors (Rom. viii. 37), and place them out of the reach of sin and sorrow for ever. Besides the habitual peace which arises from the believing consideration of these truths, he has likewise peculiar seasons of refreshment, when he manifests himself to the soul in a way the world knows not of, and often makes the hour of their sharpest trials the time of their sweetest and highest consolations. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ," 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. All dispensations are under his direction. He is Lord of all, and does according to his pleasure among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth. He is the supreme disposer,

1st, Of these external dispensations which are distinguished by the name of providential.

(1.) Those that are welcome and prosperous are both his gifts and his purchase. To his people they come free; but he paid dear for them. And this gives them their chief value in the judgment of those who know him, to receive them as the pledges and fruits of his redeeming love. When the blessings of common providence are received and enjoyed as the gifts of God reconciled in Christ, they are then, and not otherwise, truly comfortable. It is this thought enables the poor believer often to taste a sweeter relish and flavour in bread and water, than the voluptuary ever knew in the wasteful profusion and studied refinements of luxury. To be able to look back and see how the hand of our gracious Lord has led us from our childhood, chose and managed better for us than we could have done, corrected our mistakes, and in many things exceeded our desires; to look around and see all our concerns in his sure keeping, who delights in our prosperity, and will suffer nothing to grieve us, but what he intends to employ as means for our greater advantage; and to look forward and see, that he has prepared still better things for us than ever our eyes beheld, or our hearts conceived, —how cheering are these views! Those who are thus stayed upon the Lord Jesus, as overruling and managing all our concerns, are not terrified with every shaking leaf: "their hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord."

(2.) Afflictive dispensations are likewise of his sending. And the consideration of his hand in them, the good he designs us by them, the assurance we have of being supported under them, and brought through them; according to the degree in which these things are apprehended by faith, and accompanied with a humbling sense of their own demerits, his people submit to his appointment with patience and thankfulness, and say, after the pattern which he has left them, The cup which my Saviour puts into my hand, shall I not drink it?

In brief, it is he who appointed the time and place of our birth, and all the successive connections of our lives. Our civil and our religious liberties are both owing to his favour; and in these he has been peculiarly favourable to us. "He has not dealt so with every nation," Psal. cxlvii. 20.

2dly, Of the dispensation of grace. It is he who raises up instruments to preach his gospel, appoints them their places, furnishes them with that measure of gifts and sufficiency which he sees requisite and best. And it is he only that makes their poor labours successful. He sends his word to some, and brings others to his word; and in both cases, he so makes use of ordinary means, that to a common eye he seems to do nothing, when in reality he does all. He brought St. Paul to Corinth, and maintained him there a considerable time against all the efforts of his enemies, Acts xviii, 10. He over-ruled the thoughtless rambling of Onesimus (Phil. 11), and led him, by a way which he knew not, to the means by which he had appointed to bring him to the knowledge of himself. And these instances are recorded for our instruction, as specimens of what he does in the same kind every day.

3dly, Of the dispensation of death. Our times are in his hands. He claims it as his own prerogative that he keeps the keys of death and the invisible state, Rev. i. 18. None can remove us sooner, none can detain us a moment longer, than his call. In this likewise he is little observed. We charge death to fevers, frights, and falls; but these are only the messengers which he sends. Sin has brought us all under a sentence of death; but the moment and the manner of the execution befal us according to his good pleasure. Till then, though his providence leads us through fire and water, though we walk upon the brink of a thousand apparent, and a million of unseen dangers, we are in reality in perfect safety. Having appointed St. Paul to stand before Cæsar, though the tempest greatly assaulted.

and seemingly overpowered the ship he was in, St. Paul was as safe on the stormy sea, when all probable hope of being saved (Acts xxvii. 24) was taken away, as Cæsar himself upon his throne. But when his time is come, in vain are all the assistance of friends, the skill of the physician, or the power of medicines, to procure the smallest respite.

4thly, Of the dispensation of judgment. "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son" (John v. 22); and has especially appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by the man Christ Jesus whom he hath ordained, Acts xvii. 31. Then his glory shall be confessed by all. Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. Awful will that day be to those who hate him, when he shall appear in flaming fire, to convince sinners of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, Jude 15. They must give an account of all. Account, did I say? They can give none, but will be struck dumb before him, and hear with horror their dreadful doom, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matth. xxv. 41.

But it will be a joyful time to his own people. The clouds of infirmity, affliction, and reproach, under which they are now obscured, shall vanish away, and they shall shine forth like the sun in the presence of their Father. God, even their own God, shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. They shall be glorified, and their enemies ashamed. What joy will fill their hearts when Jesus the Judge shall own his relation to them before assembled worlds, and shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then sorrow and sighing shall be heard no more; but songs of triumph and shouts of everlasting joy shall take place; and so shall they be ever with the Lord.

How are your hearts affected with this subject? Do you not expect that I should close it with a suitable word of application?

1. To those who are as yet in their sins. Will you not tremble before this great Lord God? If these things are not so, if you can prove that we have followed cunningly-devised fables, go on secure. But have I not your consciences on my side? Do you not feel a secret foreboding that these are the truths of God? And dare you still persist? Do you not see that you are already in his hands? In a moment he could break you in pieces, yet he spares. He affords you one opportunity more. To-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice, lest to-morrow should surprise you into eternity, and the weight of unpardoned sins should sink you into the lowest hell. As he has power to punish, so likewise he is mighty to save. Believe his word and live. His obedience unto death is a plea with which you may approach the mercy-seat. He has power to take away your heart of stone, to subdue your enmity, to forgive your sins; and what he does he does freely, without money and without price. You need not, you cannot mend yourselves before you come to him. If you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you obstinately reject him, you will perish under the most aggravated guilt, as sinners against the light and grace of the gospel.

2. You that see your need of a Saviour, lift up your heads and rejoice. Is he not, thus qualified, able to save to the uttermost? Why should you keep back, when he bids you come unto him that you may find rest? Could you invent any invitations more free, more full than those that are recorded in the gospel? Can you desire any stronger security than the blood of Jesus and the oath of him that liveth for ever? Do you wish to know how other great sinners have succeeded in their application to him? Search the scriptures, and read how he saved Mary Magdalene, the dying thief, the cruel jailor, the persecuting Saul, and many of those who were actually concerned in nailing him to the cross. Be patient, continue waiting on him in prayer, and you shall find he has not inclined you to seek his face in vain.

3. To believers I hope this is a comfortable theme. You see all your concerns are in safe hands. He to whom you have committed your souls is able to keep them. Jesus, who has all authority and power in heaven and in earth, vouchsafes to be your Shepherd. What then can you want, who are at his providing? What have you to fear, who are under his protection? Why then do you so often distrust, so often complain? It is because your faith is weak. Are you tempted to think you could place yourselves to more advantage than he has placed you, that you could do better without the afflictions he is pleased to send you, that you cannot spare what he takes away, nor do well without something which he withholds? Reject all such thoughts; they are highly dishonourable to your Saviour, and to your profession. Those who know not God must reason thus; but you have a covenant-promise, that all things are working together for your good. "This is not your rest, it is polluted." But you will soon be at home; and then, when, by a clearer light, you look back upon the way by which the Lord led you through the wilderness, you will be ashamed (if shame is compatible with the heavenly state) of your misapprehensions while in this dark world, and will confess to his praise, that mercy and goodness surrounded you in every step, and that the Lord did all things well. What you will then see, it is now your duty and your privilege to believe. If you sincerely desire his guidance in all things, labour to submit to it. The path

which he has marked out for you is difficult, but he has trod it before you, and it leads to glory. The time is short. Yet a little while, and you shall receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

SERMON VIII.

THE GLORY AND GRACE OF GOD REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. MATTH. xi. 27.

THE love we bear to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the confidence we place in him, will always be exactly proportioned to the apprehensions we form of him. Therefore, to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him" (2 Pet. ii. 18.), are spoken of as inseparably connected. On this account the scriptures are frequent and full in describing him to us, that we may have a large acquaintance with his all-sufficiency, and be delivered from our sins and fears. An awakened conscience, that sees the need of a Saviour, well knows that the person who can deservedly lay claim to its trust, must have these three properties, power, authority, and intention to save. How these eminently belong to Jesus, we learn from his own words here. Power belongeth to him, for he is a divine person, the Creator, Possessor, and Upholder of all things. Authority is his, for all things are delivered to him. Thus far we have proceeded, and are now to speak of his intention or office, the design of his appearance, and for which he is authorised. This is intimated in the close of my text. We are therefore now to speak,

III. Of his office, summarily included in this one thing, *To reveal the knowledge of God.* "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

The knowledge of God here spoken of, intends something more than merely to know that there is a God. Some faint apprehensions of this all men have by nature. This great truth is so clearly manifested in the works of creation and providence, that any man would be greatly offended, if he was supposed to be ignorant of it. But as it is one thing to know that there is a king over the nation, and quite another thing to know the king, so as to have liberty of access to him, and an interest in his favour; so is it in the case before us. Our Lord did not come to tell us that there is a God (the devils know this, and tremble), but to reveal to us such a knowledge of God as may stand with our comfort, to teach us how poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners may draw near to God with hopes in his mercy, and call him their Father and their friend.

Now, besides the revelation of this knowledge in the Old Testament, which may be properly ascribed to Christ, inasmuch as he was the Lord, the guide, and teacher of his church from the beginning, and instructed Moses and the prophets in the things concerning himself,—I say, besides this (which was made at sundry times, and in divers manners, in a more dark and imperfect way), our Lord Jesus, through his incarnation, has vouchsafed us a twofold revelation of that knowledge of God in which standeth our eternal life,—1. In his Person; and, 2. By his Spirit.

I. In his Person. In this respect he is said to be "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his * substance," Heb. i. 3. That God is great, and good, and wise, appears in part from his works; but it is only a small portion of these attributes we can spell out in this way; and there are other perfections in God, of which we can gain no certain knowledge, without a farther revelation. But would we see a glorious display of the great God, let us turn our eyes to Jesus, and behold him by faith in two principal views:

1. As hanging upon the cross. Could we have seen this awful transaction, and been in a right frame of mind, we should naturally have asked such questions as these: Who is he? What has he done? Had we been told, This person, thus destitute and tormented, is the beloved Son of God, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; we must have farther asked, Why then was he scourged, wounded, and nailed to the tree? Why are those barbarous men permitted to mock his sufferings? Why does he not deliver himself, and destroy his enemies? The proper answer to these questions includes a revelation of the divine perfections.

1st, Wisdom. We had deserved to perish, but his mercy designed to save us with an everlasting salvation. Yet this must be in a way worthy of himself. Sin must be punished, and the honour of his broken law vindicated. How could this be done, and the righteousness of God made to harmonize with our peace? A wisdom astonishing to angels is manifested in devising this wonderful means. No sacrifices (Heb. x. 4—7.) or offerings, no acts of obedience or mediation, which creatures could supply, would have been of the least avail when the injured majesty of God demanded a satisfaction. But the eternal Word, united to our nature, afforded a propitiation worthy of God, and suitable for us. Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin (Dan. ix. 24), and brought in

* Τῆς ὑποστάσεως.

an everlasting righteousness, available for all those who flee to him as the hope set before them, for refuge from approaching wrath.

2dly, Love. "God *so loved* the world."—If you ask, How? judge from this instance; words cannot express it. He so loved sinners, enemies, rebels, that for their sakes he abandoned and delivered up his beloved Son into the hands of wicked men, permitted him to be assaulted by the powers of darkness; yea, it pleased the Father himself to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. This is love without parallel, and beyond conception. We can only admire, and say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us," 1 John, iii. 1. When Jesus Christ, as crucified, is clearly apprehended by faith, then we have the most convincing, the most affecting proof, that God is love.

3dly, Justice. Wonder not that God's own Son is thus treated. He stands in the place of sinners, and therefore he is not, he cannot be, spared. The words his enemies use (Matth. xxvii. 42.) to his reproach, will, in the lips of his redeemed people, be an expression of his highest praise. Having undertaken to save others, and being determined not to give up their cause, it is, in that respect, absolutely impossible for him to save himself.

Again, this justice, which was once as a flaming sword, to forbid and exclude every hope of salvation to fallen man, is now engaged in our behalf. For since it has pleased the Father to charge sin upon his own Son, his wrath will turn away from all who believe. The immense debt is already paid, and justice will not exact it twice. From henceforth God is not only gracious and merciful, but (1 John, i. 9.) just and faithful, in the forgiveness of sin, and declares his own righteousness in justifying the believer in Jesus, Rom. iii. 26.

2. The knowledge of God is made known in the person of Christ, if we contemplate him as reigning in glory. He is no longer a man of sorrows, oppressed and despised. He is now upon the throne. In him the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and from him, as light from the sun, the unsearchable riches of his goodness are communicated to indigent, unworthy sinners. All the divine perfections shine gloriously in him, as the God-man, the Mediator, who is exalted above all conception and praise, and doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

1st, Grace. The great God is pleased to manifest himself in Christ as the God of grace. This grace is manifold, pardoning, converting, restoring, persevering grace, bestowed upon the miserable and worthless. Grace finds the sinner in a hopeless, helpless state, sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Grace pardons the guilt, cleanses the pollution, and subdues the power of sin. Grace sustains the bruised reed, binds up the broken heart, and cherishes the smoking flax into a flame. Grace restores the soul from wandering, revives it when fainting, heals it when wounded, upholds it when ready to fall, teaches it to fight, goes before it in the battle, and at last makes it more than conqueror over all opposition, and then bestows a crown of everlasting life. But all this grace is established and displayed by covenant in the Man Christ Jesus, and without respect to him as living, dying, rising, reigning, and interceding in the behalf of sinners, would never have been known.

2dly, Power. The whole creation proclaims that power belongs unto God. But in nothing will his power be more illustriously displayed than in the wonders of redeeming love! What power is necessary to raise those who are spiritually dead in sin, to soften the heart of stone, to bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion? Wherever his gospel is faithfully preached, it is always confirmed by this accompanying power. How quickly, how easily, did he change Saul from a persecutor to an apostle? Again, how is his power illustrated by the care he takes of all who believe in his name, affording to every one of them seasonable, suitable, and sufficient supplies in every time of need? So that his weak, helpless, and opposed people, are supported, strengthened, and enabled, to hold on, and to hold out, against all the united efforts of the world, sin, and Satan.

3dly, Bounty. How glorious is Jesus in his kingdom! Exalted beyond all conception and praise; wearing upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, the name that is above every name; and having all thrones, principalities, and powers, obedient to his will, and adoring at his feet. But all his riches and honours (so far as their capacities can receive) he condescends to share with his people. He owns their worthless names, he permits them to claim the most tender relation to him, and to call him their brother, their friend, and their husband. Yea, he says concerning them, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. To him therefore we must look for the most astonishing and affecting display of the divine bounty.

Thus the knowledge of God is revealed in the person of Christ by the word. But great and important as these truths are, we cannot receive and understand them merely by reading. The Lord Jesus therefore has favoured his church with a farther revelation. That is,

II. By his Spirit. This was one principal fruit of his ascension and intercession, Acts ii. 33. With the promise of his Spirit he cheered his disciples when sorrowing under the apprehension of his departure: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go

not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. The offices of the Holy Spirit are various as our wants; he teaches, comforts, sanctifies, and seals the children of God; but he affects all these benefits by revealing the knowledge of God, as manifested in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

1. In convincing sinners of their lost estate, which is absolutely necessary to their deliverance. None will prize the Saviour but those who feel their need of him. Two things are necessary to convince a man of his lost condition by nature and practice as a sinner,—the spirituality of the law, and the sufferings of Christ: the one shews the universality of sin, the other its demerit. But these can only be truly discerned by the light of the Spirit of Christ. While St. Paul (who was never absolutely without the law) was ignorant of the law's spirituality, "I was (says he) alive," Rom. vii. 9. I had so little knowledge, both of the law and of myself, that I trusted to it for righteousness, and vainly thought that I yielded it obedience, and grounded my hopes of salvation thereon. "But when the commandment came," when the Spirit explained and enforced it in its full extent, as reaching to the very thoughts of the heart, and requiring an obedience absolutely perfect, "then sin revived, and I died." All my hopes vanished; I saw every principle, affection, and action, polluted, and the corruptions which I supposed were tamed, broke forth with redoubled vigour. Again, though sin is declared to be displeasing to God, and destructive to man, by all the evils and miseries with which the world is filled, and all the punishments which the righteous Judge of all the earth has inflicted on the account of it; yet the just demerit of sin is not to be learned by the destruction of Sodom or of the old world, but only from the sufferings of Christ, who has borne the curse for sinners. Nor is it sufficient to know historically that he did suffer, and how he suffered. Where these things are not known by the light of the Spirit, they are no more regarded than a worn-out tale. But where the Spirit of Christ reveals by the word, the nature, cause, and end of his sufferings, then sin appears exceedingly sinful. Nothing less than this can make the soul abhor it.

2. The Spirit produces faith in Jesus, as having once suffered, and now mighty to save. His blood, his righteousness, his intercession, compassion, and power, are presented to the soul in a light which bears down the objections of guilt, unbelief, and Satan. Then the wounds made by sin are healed. Then old things pass away, all things become new, all difficulties are solved, and God is revealed experimentally to the soul, as holy, righteous, and true, in justifying the believer in Jesus.

3. Those whom the Spirit thus comforts, he also seals, Ephes. i. 13. He impresses the image of Christ upon them. Such is the power of the views he gives them of his glory, that they are transformed into the resemblance of their Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Though the first traces of this delineation are faint and indistinct in the sight of men, yet they are perfect in kind. The Spirit impresses feature for feature, and grace for grace (John i. 16.) and in the chief thing he designs and effects by all his subsequent dispensations while the soul remains in the body, is to heighten and finish the heavenly signature. Together with this, and in the same degree, he seals and ratifies to their consciences an interest in all the promises of the gospel; and by infusing into their hearts the temper of children, he gives them confidence at the throne of grace, enables them to cry, Abba, Father, and bears witness with their spirits that they are born of God. Thus God is revealed not only to them, but in them; and they are made conformable to him in whom they believe, in all righteousness, goodness, and truth.

Let me once more address,

1. Poor mourning souls. Are you seeking to Jesus? you have good reason; you see he is a mighty Saviour. He is furnished with full authority, and came expressly on purpose to save such as you. He assures you that none shall sincerely seek him in vain. Believe his word, and dismiss your fears. He has begun his good work, by revealing to you your misery, danger, and helplessness, by leading your thoughts to himself. He will not stop here; he will, in due time, accomplish his whole commission, by revealing to you that knowledge of God in which standeth your present peace and eternal life.

2. Careless sinners. How greatly will your guilt be aggravated if you receive this grace of God, the gospel of salvation, in vain? Do not your hearts tremble when you think of meeting the Lord Jesus in glory? Have you an answer ready, when he shall ask you why you refused his instruction, and cast his words behind you? The light of truth has visited you: how long will you resist it? how long will Satan blind your eyes? To those who accept not his revelation of grace, he will be ere long revealed in flaming fire. O humble yourselves before him, while the hope of mercy is yet afforded; and pray for the Spirit we have been speaking of, that you may be recovered out of the snare of the devil, and made partakers of the knowledge and image of God.

3. Believers. This subject is the food of your souls. You remember when you had dark, hard, and uncomfortable thoughts of God; but you have seen his glory in the person of Christ, you have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God (1 Cor. ii. 12.), that you may know the things that are freely given you of God. You were once

darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, Eph. v. 8. Walk then as children of the light; remember your calling, your privileges, your obligations, your engagements. Let these all animate you to press forward, to endure the cross, to despise the shame. Let it not grieve you to suffer with Christ here, for hereafter you shall reign with him. The hour is swiftly approaching, when you shall be out of the reach of changes and sorrow for ever. Then "thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Isaiah lx. 20.

SERMON IX.

LABOURING AND HEAVY-LADEN SINNERS DESCRIBED.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH. xi. 28

We read that when David was withdrawn into the wilderness from the rage of Saul, every one that was in distress, or in debt, or discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became their captain, 1 Sam. xxii. 2. This would be reckoned but small honour in the judgment of Saul and his court, to be the head of a company of fugitives. Those who judge by outward appearances, and are governed by the maxims of worldly wisdom, cannot have much more honourable thoughts of the present state of Christ's mystical kingdom and subjects upon earth. The case of David was looked upon as desperate by those who, like Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 10.), lived at their ease. They did not know, or would not believe, the promise of God, that he should be king over Israel; and therefore they preferred the favour of Saul, whom God had rejected. In like manner, though our Lord Jesus Christ was a divine person, invested with all authority, grace, and blessings, and declared the purpose of God concerning himself, and all who should obey his voice, that he would be their King, and they should be his happy people; yet the most that heard him saw no excellence in him, or need of him; their portion and their hearts were in this world, therefore they rejected him, and treated him as a blasphemer and a madman. A few, however, there were who felt their misery, and desired to venture upon his word. To these he gave the freest invitation. Those who accepted it, found his promise made good, and rejoiced in his light. Thus it is still: he is no longer upon earth to call us; but he has left these gracious words for an encouragement to all who need a Saviour. The greatest part of mankind, even in christian countries, are too happy, or too busy to regard him. They think they deserve some commendation, if they do not openly mock his messengers, disdain his message, and offer abuse to all who would press them to-day, while it is called to-day, to hear his voice. Even this treatment his servants must expect from many. But there are a few, like David's men, distressed in conscience, deeply in debt to the law of God, and discontented with the bondage of sin, who see and believe that He, and He only, is able to save them. To these labouring and heavy-laden souls, he still says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." May his gracious Spirit put life and power into his own words, and into what he shall enable me to speak from them, that they may at this time receive a blessing and peace from his hands!

The text readily points out three inquries:

1. Who are the persons here invited?
2. What is it to come to Christ?
3. What is implied in the promised rest?

I. The persons are those who labour (the Greek expresses toil with weariness*) and are heavy-laden. This must, however, be limited to spiritual concerns, otherwise it will take in all mankind, even the most hardened and obstinate opposers of Christ and the gospel. For let your consciences speak, you that account the yoke of Christ a heavy burden, and judge his people to be miserable and melancholy, are not you wearied and burdened in your own way? Surely you are often tired of your drudgery. Though you are so wedded and sold to your hard master, that you cannot break loose; though you are so mad as to be fond of your chains; yet you know, and I know (for I remember the gall and wormwood of that state), that you do not find all that pleasure in your wickedness which you pretend to. So much as you affect to despise hypocrisy, you are great hypocrites yourselves. You often laugh when you are not pleased; you roar out your boisterous mirth sometimes, when you are almost ready to roar with anguish and disquiet of spirit. You court the friendship of those whom in your heart you despise; and though you would be thought to pay no regard at all to the word of God, there are seasons when (like him you serve) you believe and tremble. And farther, what visible burdens do you bring upon yourselves? "The way of transgressors is hard," Prov. xiii. 15. Your follies multiply your troubles every day. Confusion and uneasiness in your families, waste of substance, loss of health and reputation, discord, strife, sorrow, and shame; these are the bitter fruits of your evil ways, which prey on your present hours, and make your future prospects darker

* Compare Luke v. 5. John iv. 6. where the origin. word is the same.

every day. Surely you are weary and heavy laden beyond expression.

But this is not the case with others. You avoid gross vices, you have perhaps a form of godliness. The worst, you think, that can be said of you is, that you employ all your thoughts, and every means that will not bring you under the lash of the law, to heap up money, to join house to house, and field to field; or you spend your days in a thoughtless indolence, walk in the way of your own hearts, and look no farther: and here you will say you find pleasure, and insist on it, that you are neither weary nor heavy laden. I might enlarge on your many disappointments, the vain fears which are inseparable from those who live without God in the world, and the trouble we find from disorderly, restless, and unsatisfied passions. But, to wave these things, I say briefly, that if you are not labouring and heavy laden, then it is plain that you are not the persons whom Christ here invites to partake of his rest. And though you can rest without him now, think, O think, what rest you will find without him hereafter? If you now say, Depart, he will then say, Depart. And who will smile upon you when he frowns? To whom will you then flee for help? or where will you leave your glory? O that it would please him to touch your hearts, that, as weary and heavy-laden sinners, you might fall humbly at his feet, before his wrath burn like fire, and there be none to quench it!

But to proceed: let us,

1. Explain the terms, what it is to *labour* and be *heavy laden*.

2. Shew who are the persons that answer this description.

First, the persons are said to be,

1. Labouring, toiling, weary. This is not hard to be understood. Weariness proceeds either from labour or from weakness; and when these are united, when a person has much to do, or to bear, and but little strength, he will soon be weary. The case of some, however, is, that when they are tired, they can lay down their burden, or leave off their work. But these are not only labouring, fainting, weary, but,

2. Heavy laden, likewise. As if a man had a burden which he was unable to bear a single minute, so fastened upon him, that he could not by any means be freed from it; but it must always press him down, night and day, abroad or at home, sleeping (if sleep in such a circumstance was possible) and waking. How would the poor creature be wearied! How could you comfort or give him ease, unless you could rid him of his burden? How desirable would the prospect of liberty be to such a one! and how great his obligations and acknowledgments to his deliverer!

Secondly, This representation is an emblem of the distresses, and burdens of those who seek to Jesus, that they may have rest in their souls; nor can any truly seek him till they feel themselves in such a state. They may be generally comprised under three classes:

1. Awakened sinners. None but those who have felt it can conceive how sinners labour, toil, and faint, under their first convictions. They are burdened,

1st, With the guilt of sin. This is a heavy load. When Jesus bore it, it made him sweat great drops of blood. It is true, he bore the weight of all his people's sins; but the weight of one sin is sufficient to press us down, if God permits it to lie heavy upon us. I suppose the best of us can remember some action, some incident or other, in our past lives, which we would wish to forget if we could. Now, how would you be distressed to have a person sounding in your ears, from morning till night, and every day of your lives, that worst thing that ever you did? Would it not weary you? This is a faint image of the convinced sinner's state. When conscience is truly awakened, it acts this officious and troublesome part; but its remonstrances are not confined to one sin, it renews the remembrance and the aggravations of multitudes. Nor is this the voice of a man, but indeed of God, who speaks in and by the conscience. The poor sinner hears and trembles: then the complaint of Job is understood: "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth," Job xiii. 26. Do you wonder that such a one can no longer take pleasure in worldly things? It is impossible, unless you could silence this importunate voice, that they can bear themselves at all. Nay, often it is so strong and urgent, gives them such a lively sense of what sin is, and what it deserves from a righteous God, that they are almost afraid or ashamed to see any person that knows them. They are ready to think, that people can read in their faces what passes in their hearts, and almost expect that the ground should open under their feet. O how wearisome is it to be continually bowed down with such a burden as this?

2dly, With the power of sin. Perhaps they were once in some measure at ease in this respect; they saw others whom they supposed to be worse; and therefore trusted in themselves that they were righteous. But convictions rouse and inflame our sinful natures. St Paul exemplifies this by his own case before conversion: "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Rom. vii. 9. He never was strictly without the law, for he expected salvation by obeying it; but he was without the knowledge of its spirituality, demands, and sanction; and while he remained thus, he was alive, that is, his hope remained good, and he was satisfied with his obedience. But when the commandment came, when its extent, purity, and penalty were brought home to his

conscience, sin revived, and he died. He found all his pretensions to liberty, obedience, and comfort were experimentally confuted by what he felt in himself. The more an awakened sinner strives against his corruptions, the more they seem to increase. This wearies him; for, besides the greatness of the toil itself, he finds himself weak, weak as water, weaker and weaker. And he is not only weary, but heavy laden; for this likewise is a burden which he cannot shake off. He sees that he cannot succeed, yet he dares not desist.

2. Those who are seeking salvation by the works of the law are labouring and heavy laden, engaged in what is beyond their strength, and baffles all their endeavours. This may appear from what has been already said. It is a hard task to keep the whole law; and nothing else will either please God, if made the ground of justification, or satisfy the conscience that has any true light. Those declarations of the word, that "cursed is the man who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10), and "whoso keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all" (James ii. 10), keep them in continual anxiety and servitude. The wickedness of their flesh makes it impossible for the law to give a ground of hope; yet they cannot lay down their burden, but are compelled to renew the fruitless task. I speak not of mere formalists, who go through a round of external services without meaning or design; but all who are in a measure sincere, find themselves still followed with a restless inquiry, "What lack I yet?" Matth. xix. 20. Endless are the shifts and contrivances they are put to, but all in vain; for, what makes it worse, they always add to this burden many inventions of their own, as though the demands of the law were too few.

3. Those who are under temptation. It is a hard and wearisome service to be in close conflict with the powers of darkness. The leading branches of this exercise are,

1st, When the soul is assaulted, and, as it were, filled with insufferable blasphemies. When Satan is permitted to shoot these fiery darts, none can express (not even those who have felt them) the amazement and confusion that fills the mind. For a person who has received a reverence for the name and attributes of God to be haunted from morning to night, from day to day, with horrid imprecations, so strongly impressed, that he often starts and trembles with an apprehension that he has certainly consented, and spoken them aloud with his lips,—this is irksome and terrifying beyond description.

2dly, When the foundations of faith and experience are attacked. Many who have thought themselves grounded in the truth, who have hoped that they had surely tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have in their first comforts been ready to say, "I shall never be moved (Psal. xxx. 6), thou, Lord, of thy goodness hast made my mountain so strong," have found themselves afterwards at their wits end, when the enemy has been permitted to come in upon them like a flood, Isa. lix. 19. One black cloud of temptation has blotted out all their comfortable evidences; and they have been left to question, not only the justness of their own hopes, but even the first and most important principles on which their hopes were built.

3dly, When the hidden corruptions and abominations of the heart are stirred up. And perhaps there is no other way but this of coming to the knowledge of what our depraved natures are capable. Such things a season of temptation has discovered to some, which I believe no rack nor tortures could constrain them to disclose, though but to their dearest friend. This subject, therefore, will not bear a particular illustration. The Lord's people are not all acquainted with these depths of Satan. As people who live on shore have a variety of trials, dangers, and deliverances, yet know but little of the peculiar exercises of those who go down to the sea in ships; so, in the present case there are great waters (Psal. cvii. 24), depths of temptation, known comparatively to few. Those who are brought through them, have more to say of the wonders of God in the great deep than others; and this is his design in permitting it, that they may know more of him and more of themselves. But while they are under these trials, they are weary and heavy laden; and this burden they must bear till the Lord removes it. The help of men, books, and ordinances, is sought and tendered in vain, till his appointed hour of deliverance draws near.

These, therefore, convinced, striving, and tempted souls, are the persons to whom Jesus says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." The purport of this gracious invitation we are to consider hereafter. In the meantime rejoice in this, Jesus has foreseen your cases, and provided accordingly. He says, *Come*; that is, *believe*, as he himself expounds it: "He that cometh unto me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst," John vi. 35. See how his promises suit the state you are in.

1. Are you heavy laden with guilt? The gospel-message is, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John i. 7.

2. Are you groaning under the power of indwelling sin? Hear his gracious words: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," John xi. 25. And to the same purpose his prophet: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increases strength," Is. xl. 29.

3. Are you striving in the fire to keep the law? "Wherefore will you spend your mo-

ney for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Forego the vain attempt. Is it not written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?" Rom. x. 4.

4. Are you in temptation? He that says, "Come unto me," has been tempted himself (Heb. ii. 18), and knows how to pity you. He has power over your enemy, and can deliver you with a word, Mark i. 27. Did he not thus dispossess Satan in the days of his humiliation? And if then, surely he is no less able now; for since that time he has gloriously triumphed over the powers of darkness," Col. ii. 15. And as his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy; he has said, without exception, "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast him out" (John vi. 37); and thousands who have been in your distress, have successively found that promise fulfilled: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Rom. xvi. 20; Zech. iii. 2. ☙

SERMON X.

OF COMING TO CHRIST.

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH xi. 28.

THE dispensation of the gospel may be compared to the cities of refuge in Israel. It was a privilege, an honour to the nation in general, that they had such sanctuaries of divine appointment; but the real value of them was known to few. Those only who found themselves in that case for which they were provided could rightly prize them. In like manner, the gospel of Christ is the highest privilege and honour of which a professing nation can boast; but it can be truly esteemed and understood by none but weary and heavy-laden souls, who have felt their misery by nature, are tired of the drudgery of sin, and have seen the curse of the broken law pursuing them like the avenger of blood of old. This is the only consideration that keeps them from despair, that God has provided a remedy by the gospel; and Jesus has said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." If they could receive the full comfort of these words, and heartily obey the call, their complaints would be at an end; but remaining ignorance, unbelief, and Satan, combine in various ways to keep them back. Some will say, "O that I could come! but, alas! I cannot." Others, "I fear I do not come aright."——Having, therefore, endeavoured to shew you the persons chiefly intended here under the character of those who labour and are heavy laden, I proceed to consider,

II. What it is to come to Christ. I have observed in general, that it appears to have the same signification with believing in him. But that we may understand it the more clearly, let us inquire,

1. How those to whom he personally spoke these words, in all probability, understood them?

2. How far their apprehensions of them are applicable and suitable to our circumstances?

3. Whether, as we have the same necessity, we have not likewise equal encouragement to come to him with those who were conversant with him upon earth?

1. It does not appear that those to whom our Lord spoke in person, were so much perplexed as many are now, to know what *coming* or *believing* should mean; he seems to have been understood (John vi. 30, and xix. 36.), both by friends and enemies. Many questioned his authority and right to exact a dependence on himself; but they seemed to be at no difficulty about his meaning. It certainly implied more than a mere bodily coming into his presence. He was surrounded, and even followed, by multitudes, who never came to him in the sense of his invitation. To such while standing about him, he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," John v. 40. Therefore, if we consult what is written of those who came to Jesus for relief, and obtained it, we may conclude, that coming to him implies,

1st, A persuasion of his power, and of their own need of his help. They knew that they wanted relief, and conceived of him as an extraordinary person, empowered and able to succour them. This persuasion of Christ's sufficiency and willingness was then, as it is now, afforded in different degrees. The centurion spoke with full assurance; "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," Matth. viii. 8. The leper more dubiously: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Matth. viii. 2. Another, in still fainter language: "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion, and help us," Mark ix. 22. The faith of this last was, as the man himself acknowledged, mixed with much unbelief and fear; yet Jesus did not despise the day of small things; he pardoned his suspicions, confirmed his fluctuating mind, granted him his request; and his case is recorded as an instance how graciously he accepts and cherishes the feeblest effects of true faith: "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

2dly, An actual application. This evidenced their faith to be right. They did not sit content with having heard of him, but improved it: they went to him, told him their cases, and implored his compassion. Their faith prevailed against all discouragements. In vain the multitude charged them to hold their peace (Mark x. 48.); knowing that he only was able to relieve them, they cried so much

the more a great deal. Even when he seemed to discover a great reserve (Matth. xv. 27.) they still waited, and knew not how to depart without an answer. Nor could a sense of unworthiness, fear, or shame, keep them back, (Mark v. 27.), when once they had a strong persuasion of his power to save.

3dly, When he was sought to as a soul-physician, as was the case with many whose bodily diseases he healed, and with others who were not sick, those who came to him, continued with him, and became his followers. They depended on him for salvation, received him as their Lord and Master, professed an obedience to his precepts, accepted a share in his reproach, and renounced every thing that was inconsistent with his will, Luke ix. 23, 60. Some had a more express and open call to this, as Matthew, who was sitting at the receipt of custom, regardless of Jesus, till he passed by him, and said, "Follow me," Matth. ix. 9. That word, accompanied with the power of his love, won his heart, and diverted him from worldly pursuits in an instant. Others were more secretly drawn by his Spirit and providence, as Nathaniel, and the weeping penitent (John i. 46.; Luke vii. 38.), who silently washed his feet with her tears: and this was the design and effect of many of their bodily and family afflictions. The man who was brought to be healed of the palsy (Mark ii. 5.) received the forgiveness of his sins; and the ruler, who first came to Jesus with no other view than to obtain the life of his son (John iv. 53.), obtained much more than he asked or expected. The Lord afforded such an affecting sense of his power and goodness upon that occasion, that he from henceforth believed, with all his house.

2. These things are applicable to us. Jesus is no longer visible upon earth; but he has promised his spiritual presence to abide with his word, ordinances, and people, to the end of time. Weary and heavy-laden souls have now no need to take a long journey to seek him; for he is always near them, and in a spiritual manner, where his gospel is preached. Poor and inconsiderable as we are in the judgment of the world, I trust we have a right to claim his promise (Matth. xviii. 20), and to believe that he is even now in the midst of us. Therefore come unto him; that is,

1st, Raise your hearts and breathe forth your complaints to him. Do you see your need of him? Be persuaded, and pray to him to assure you more strongly of his power and goodness. He is just such a Saviour as your circumstances require, as you yourself could wish for; and he is able to convince you in a moment that he is so. If he is pleased to cause a ray of his glory to break in upon your mind, your fears, and doubts, and griefs, would instantly give place.

2dly, Persevere in this application to him. Set a high value upon these his public ordinances, and be constant in attending them. His eye is fixed upon us; his arm is revealed amongst us. I trust it is a time of his grace, and that every day we meet he does something for one or another in the assembly. He has a fixed time for every one whom he relieves. He knew how long the poor man had waited at the pool-side (John v. 6.); and when his hour came, he spake and relieved him. So do you endeavour to be found in his way; and not here only, but in whatever he has made your duty. Read his word; be frequent in secret prayer. You will find many things arising from within and without to discourage and weary you in this course; but persist in it, and in good time you shall find rest for your souls. These are the means which the Lord has appointed you. Converse likewise at proper opportunities with his people; perhaps he may unexpectedly join you, as he did the two disciples when walking to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 32.), and cause your hearts to burn within you. Further,

3dly, You are to follow him, to take up his cross, to make a profession of his name and gospel, to bear contentedly a share in the reproach and scorn which is the usual lot of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus, in the midst of an unbelieving and perverse generation. You are not only to trust in him as a priest to atone for your sins, but to receive and obey him as your teacher and your Lord. If you are truly weary and heavy laden, you will be glad to do this, and are crying to him to enable you. and you are likewise willing to forsake every thing that is inconsistent with his will and service. If you are desirous to come to Christ, it is not grievous to you to think of parting with your sinful pleasures and vain companions. Rather these are a part of the burden from which you long to be freed.

Come in this way, and you shall find rest for your souls. Are any of you thinking,—O that I could! Surely if I had seen him, and heard him, I should have ventured. But now unbelief and fear keep me back. I observe, therefore,

3. That as we have no less need of Jesus than those of old, who saw him and conversed with him; so we have at least equal encouragement to come unto him. This, I think will appear, if we consider that,

On the one hand, the bodily presence of Christ, considered in itself, had no peculiar or extraordinary influence upon those who saw him, but all was wrought by the power of his Spirit; the same Spirit which is promised to abide with his church for ever.

1st, Multitudes who saw and heard him were unmoved and unconvinced by all the wonders of his love. Though he spake as never man spake, and went about doing good, he was slighted, opposed, and hated, even to the death. And those who know the heart of

man, and believe that the carnal mind is enmity against God, will allow it highly probable, that upon a supposition he should appear again in the same circumstances of humiliation, and to use the same authoritative freedom in vindicating the commands of God from the vain figments, traditions, and customs of men, he would meet with little better treatment, even in those countries which are called by his name, than he did from the proud, self-righteous, unbelieving Jews. We may warrantably suppose there were many more lepers, blind, &c. in the places where he resorted, than those who came to him to be healed.

2dly, Many of his professed disciples, even after they had followed him for a while, turned back, and forsook him, John, vi. 66. We have, therefore, the less reason to wonder, when we see any give up the profession of the gospel, and return to the world again. It was thus from the beginning, and those who do so now, would have done so if they had lived then. His looks, his voice, his gesture, and even his discourses and miracles, could not engage a single person to cleave to him with full purpose of heart, unless he was likewise spiritually revealed to the eye of their faith, as the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory, full of grace and truth.

3dly, Even his true disciples, who were constantly with him, to whom he had personally made the most express and endearing promises, and who sometimes thought themselves assured beyond the power of a doubt, yet could not maintain their confidence longer than his Spirit upheld them. To them expressly, though not to them exclusively, Jesus had said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John, xiv. 2.), and I will come again to receive you to myself, that "where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 3. When he had concluded that affectionate discourse, their doubts and fears were dissipated, and they could confidently say, "Now we believe" (John, xvi. 30.); yet it was not long before they found his reply fulfilled. Jesus said unto them, "Do you now believe? The hour is coming, when you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone," John, xvi. 32. Will not this instance convince you of your mistake, when you think you could depend more on a voice from heaven, than on the written word? The apostles had the strongest ground of assurance imaginable, the word of the Lord Jesus himself, face to face; and yet this would not support them, without renewed supplies of strength.

On the other hand, consider if the loss of his bodily presence is not more than made up to us,

1st, By the fuller manifestation of the Holy Spirit than was afforded before his ascension. The Holy Ghost was not then given in that clear and abundant measure as afterwards (John, vii. 39.), because Jesus was not yet glorified. While he was with them, he was their Comforter and Teacher; but he told them, "When I depart, I will send you another Comforter" (John, xiv. 16, and xvi. 7.), whose office and abode with you will be in many respects so much more advantageous, that on this account it is expedient for you that I go away.

2dly, By the greater number and variety of promises which we enjoy. We have not only the scriptures of the Old Testament in common with them, but to us the ancient revelations of the will and love of God are enlarged, explained, applied, and confirmed, by the superaddition of the New, Ephes. iii. 5.

3dly, By the experience of multitudes of all ages, people, and languages, who have gone before us, since their time, the cloud of witnesses to the truth and grace of God, the reality of eternal things, and the victorious power of faith, is now increased by the concurrent evidence of thousands and millions, who have overcome all opposition by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony.

4thly, By the proofs and living witnesses of his power and grace amongst ourselves. Are there not many, with whom you worship and converse from day to day, who can tell you, they were even dead in trespasses and sins, but he has quickened them? They were once as you are, labouring and heavy laden; they waited for him long, had a share in such temptations and conflicts as you now feel, were often at a stand, and upon the point of concluding their case to be desperate, as you may think yours at present; but at length they were enabled to come unto him, and they have found rest. Every such instance should encourage you to gird up the loins of your minds; to be patient, and hope to the end. As they have known your troubles, so shall you partake of their consolations in due time. What is it then should hinder you from coming to Jesus, that you may find rest? What exceptions can your unbelief devise against the invitations, motives, and example, which the Lord sets before you by his preached gospel?

(1.) Is it a sense of your load which makes you say you are not able? But consider that this is not a work, but a rest. Would a man plead, I am so heavy laden, that I cannot consent to part with my burden; so weary, that I am not able either to stand still or lie down, but must force myself farther? The greatness of your burden, so far from being an objection, is the very reason why you should instantly come to Christ, for he alone is able to release you.

(2.) But perhaps you think you do not come aright. I ask, how would you come?

If you can come as a helpless unworthy sinner, without strength, without righteousness, without any hope but what arises from the worth, work, and word of Christ, this is to come aright. There is no other way of being accepted. Would you refresh and strengthen yourself, wash away your own sins, free yourself from your burden, and then come to him to do these things for you? May the Lord help you to see the folly and unreasonableness of your unbelief!

I have observed already, that coming to Christ signified more at first than merely to come into his presence: so likewise, it means more now than to be found among his worshippers. Let none of you be deceived with a form of godliness. Examine your religious profession by these tests: Have you laboured under a sense of your misery? Have you known the burden of sin? Has Jesus given you rest? Or are you earnestly seeking to him for it? If you understand not the meaning of these questions, you are not yet in that state to which the promises are made. And why are you not labouring and heavy laden? Are you not sinners? Has not the righteous God revealed a law? Has he not guarded this law with the sanction of a dreadful curse? Have you not transgressed this holy law in thought, word, and deed, times without number? If you have not, why do you join in the public confession, and call for mercy when the commandments are repeated? If you have, how will you escape the penalty? How indeed, if you dare to neglect this great salvation? The law condemns you already; if you receive not the gospel you must perish without remedy; for other name or means whereby men can be saved there is none under heaven. Once more you are warned of danger; once more the refuge is set before you. We preach Jesus, who came to seek and to save those who were lost; Jesus, who was wounded with whips, and thorns, and nails, that his enemies might be healed. Does not this thought affect you? Will you slight his love, despise his blood, and crucify him afresh? God forbid. Is there not some heart now relenting, beginning to feel impressions of fear, shame, and grief? Happy beginning! Obey the voice of God now opening in your conscience! Now is the time to pray; before you knew not what to pray for; but now you see you want the blood of Christ, and the teaching of his Spirit. "Ask, and you shall receive; and seek, and you shall find." Take your warrant from my text; Jesus has said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Let your hearts answer, "Take away our iniquity, and receive us graciously: Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God; and in thee the fatherless, the helpless, the comfortless, find mercy."

SERMON XI.

OF BELIEVERS REST IN CHRIST.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH. xi. 28.

THE learned have a variety of arguments whereby to prove the scriptures to be the word of God. But though that kind of proof, which may be brought in a way of reasoning and external evidence, is doubtless useful upon proper occasions; yet I apprehend the chief and most satisfactory argument to those who are capable of receiving it, arises from the correspondence between the subject-matter of the scriptures and the state of an awakened mind. When the eyes of the understanding are opened, we begin to see every thing around us to be just so as the scriptures have described them. Then, and not till then, we perceive, that what we read in the Bible concerning the horrid evil of sin, the vileness of our fallen nature, the darkness and ignorance of those who know not God, our own emptiness, and the impossibility of finding relief and comfort from creatures, is exactly true. We cannot but apply the words of the woman of Samaria, and say, Come and see a book that has told me all that ever I did (John iv. 29.), the ground of all my complaints, the true cause and nature of all the evil I either see, hear, or feel, from day to day. And as we find our disease precisely described, so we perceive a suitableness in the proposed remedy. We need a Saviour, and he must be a mighty one; but though our wants and sins, our fears and enemies, are great and numerous, we are convinced that the character of Christ is sufficient to answer them all. We need a rest, a rest which the world cannot give. Inquire where we will among the creatures, experience brings in the same answer from all, "It is not in me." This again confirms the word of God, which has forewarned us that we shall meet nothing but disappointment in such pursuits. But there is a spiritual rest spoken of which we know to be the very thing we want, and all our remaining solicitude is how to attain it. From hence, as I said, we may assuredly conclude, that the book which gives us such just views of every thing that passes, must be given by inspiration from him who is the searcher of hearts. This proof is equally plain and conclusive to all capacities that are spiritually enlightened, and such only are able to understand it. We are now to speak,

III. Of this promised rest. And here two things offer to our consideration:

1. What this rest is?
2. How it is obtained?

1. The Greek word* expresses something more than rest, or a mere relaxation from toil; it denotes refreshment likewise. A person weary with long bearing a heavy burden, will need not only to have it removed, but likewise he wants food and refreshment, to restore his spirits, and to repair his wasted strength. Such is the rest of the gospel. It not only puts a period to our fruitless labour, but it affords a sweet reviving cordial. There is not only peace, but joy in believing. Taken at large, we may consider it as twofold:

1st, A present rest. So the apostle speaks, "We who have believed *do enter* into rest," Heb. iv. 3

(1.) The common, wearisome pursuit of the world, is described as "spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not" (Isa. lv. 2); wandering from object to object in quest of good (Psal. iv. 6), but still mortified by incessant and repeated disappointment. We should pity a person whom we should see seeking some necessary thing day after day, which we knew was impossible to be found there. It is, however, the case with all till they come to Christ. Satisfaction is what they profess to aim at, and they turn every tone (as we say), try every expedient to meet with it, but in vain. It is only to be found in him. When they come to him their wishes are answered. This is exemplified by our Lord in the character of a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls (Math. xiii. 46), who was still upon the inquiry till he had found one pearl of great price. This answered and exceeded his desires: upon the discovery of this one, he rejoiced to forego all his former acquisitions, and to give up every other possession on purpose that he might obtain it.

(2.) I have spoken something concerning the wearisome exercise of a conscience burdened with guilt; but by coming to Jesus, and believing in him, an end is put to this. When we are enabled to view our sins as laid upon Christ, that those who come are accepted in the Beloved, that there is no more condemnation, but pardon, reconciliation, and adoption are the sure privileges of all who trust in him,—O the sweet calm that immediately takes place in the soul! It is something more than deliverance. There is a pleasure more than answerable to the former pain, a comfort greater than all the trouble that went before it. Yea, the remembrance of the former bitterness greatly enhances the present pleasure. And the soul understands and experiences the meaning of those scriptures: "When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing," Psal. cxxvi. 1, 2. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation," Isa. xii. 1, 2.

(3.) There is likewise a rest from the power of sin. In vain is this sought from resolutions and endeavours in our own strength. Even after we are spiritually disposed, and begin to understand the gospel-salvation, it is usually, for a season, rather a fight than a rest. But when we are brought nearer to Christ, and taught to live upon him as our sanctification, deriving all our strength and motives from him by faith, we obtain a comparative rest in this respect also. We find hard things become easy, and mountains sink into plains, by his power displayed in our behalf. Farther,

(4.) There is a rest from our own works. The believer is quite delivered from the law as a covenant, and owes it no longer service in that view. His obedience is gracious cheerful, the effect of love, and therefore he is freed from those fears and burdens which once disturbed him in the way of duty. At first there was a secret, though unallowed dependence on himself. When his frames were lively he was strong, and thought he had something to trust to, but under a change (and changes will happen) he was at his wits end. But there is a promised, and therefore an attainable rest in this respect,—a liberty and power to repose on the finished work and unchangeable word of Christ; to follow him steadily through light and darkness; to glory in him only when our frames are brightest; and to trust in him assuredly when we are at our lowest ebb.

Such is the present rest; different in degrees according to the proportion of faith, and capable of increase even in those who have attained most, so long as we remain in this imperfect state. But there is,

2dly, A future rest, besides and beyond all that can be experienced here: "There *remaineth yet* a rest for the people of God," Heb. iv. 9. Faint and imperfect are our most enlarged ideas of that glory which shall be revealed. "It does not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John iii. 2. Who can describe or conceive the happiness of heaven? The most we can clearly understand of it lies in negatives. It will be as unlike as possible to this wilderness of sin and sorrow where we are now confined. Here we are in a warfare, but then we shall enter into perfect rest.

(1.) A rest from all sin. There no unclean thing shall defile or disturb us for ever. We shall be free from sin in ourselves. This alone would be worth dying for. Indwelling sin is a burden under which even the redeemed of the Lord must groan, whilst they sojourn in the body; and those who are most spiritual are most deeply affected with shame.

* Αναπαυσις.

humiliation, and grief, on this account, because they have the clearest views of the holiness of God, the spirituality of the law, the love of Christ, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Therefore the apostle Paul, though perhaps in grace and talents, in zeal and usefulness, distinguished above all the children of Adam, accounted himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim. i. 15.), less than the least of all saints (Eph. iii. 8.), and cried out, under the disparity he felt between what he was and what he would be, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. But we shall not carry this burden beyond the grave. The hour of dissolution shall free us from the inbred enemies (the inseparable concomitants of this frail perishing nature) which now trouble us, and we shall see them no more for ever.

Again, we shall be free from all the displeasing effects of sin in others. Our hearts shall be no more pained, nor our ears wounded, nor our eyes filled with tears, by those evils which fill the earth. Now, like Lot in Sodom, we are grieved every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked, 2 Pet. ii. 7. Who that has any love to the Lord Jesus, any spark of true holiness, any sense of the worth of souls in his heart, can see what passes amongst us without trembling? How openly, daringly, almost universally, are the commandments of God broken, his gospel despised, his patience abused, and his power defied! To be a silent spectator of these things is sufficiently grievous; but if (as we are in duty bound) we dare to stand as witnesses for God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, we find the spirit of the first born. Cain instantly takes fire, and denounces war against all who should presume to say, that we ought to obey and fear God rather than men. Invectives and ill treatment, are the certain lot of all who openly and consistently appear on the Lord's side; and if they escape stripes and bonds, imprisonment and death, it is to be ascribed to the restraints of divine providence, and (as a means in our happy land) to the temper of the laws, and to the clemency of the powers under whom we live. These things often constrain the believer to say, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest," Psal. lv. 6. Let us not be weary or faint in our minds; ere long this wish shall be answered. A glorious rest awaits you, where sin and sinners shall have no place, nor the alarms of war be heard any more.

(2.) A rest from all outward afflictions, which, though necessary, and, under the influence of divine grace, profitable, are grievous to bear; but then they will be necessary no more. Where there is no sin, there shall be no sorrow. Then, believers, God "shall wipe away all tears from your eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 4.

(3.) A rest from Satan's temptations. How busy is this adversary of God and man! what various arts, what surprising force, what constant assiduity, does he employ to ensnare, distress, and terrify those who by grace have escaped from his servitude! He says, like Pharoah of old, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will destroy," Exod. xv. 9. He follows them to the last stage of life, but he can follow them no farther. The moment of their departure out of the body, shall place them beyond his reach for ever

(4.) A rest from unsatisfied desires. Here the more we drink, the more we thirst; but there our highest wishes shall be crowned and exceeded; we shall rest in full communion with him whom we love; we shall no more complain of interruptions and imperfections, of an absent God, and a careless heart. Here, when we obtain a little glimpse of his presence, when he brings us into his banqueting-house, and spreads his banner of love over us, how gladly would we remain in such a desirable frame! How unwilling are we to come down from the mount! But these pleasing seasons are quickly ended, and often give place to some sudden unexpected trial, which robs us of all that sweetness in which we lately rejoiced. But when we ascend the holy hill of God above, we shall come down no more; we shall be for ever with the Lord, never offend him, never be separated from him again. We shall likewise rest in full conformity to him, Psal. xvii. 15. Here we find a mixture of evil in our best moments: when we approach nearest to him, we have the quickest sense of our defilement, and how much we fall short in every branch of duty, in every temper of our hearts; but when we shall see Jesus as he is, we shall be fully transformed into his image, and be perfectly like him.

2. But how is this rest to be obtained? Blessed be God, in that way which alone can render it attainable by such unworthy indigent creatures. If it was to be bought, we have nothing to offer for it; if it was proposed as a reward of merit, we can do nothing to deserve it. But Jesus has said, "I will give you rest." Our title to it cost him dear; he purchased it for us with his own blood; but to us it comes freely. Faith in his name puts us in immediate possession of the first-fruits, the earnest of this inheritance; and faith will lead us powerfully and safely through all hindrances and enemies to the full enjoyment of the whole. Faith unites us to Christ; gives us an immediate interest in all the benefits of his life, death, and intercession; opens the way of communication for all needful supplies of grace here, and insures to us the accomplishment of all the Lord has spoken to us of, in a state of glory. "He that believeth shall be

saved' (Mark xvi. 16.); saved in defiance of all the opposition of earth and hell; saved notwithstanding he is in himself unstable as water, weak as a bruised reed, and helpless as infancy. What Jesus will give, none can take away. Only remember that it is a free gift. Receive it thankfully, and rejoice in the Giver. Let him have all the glory of his own undertaking. Renounce every hope and every plea, but his promise and mediation. Commit your souls to him, and then fear nothing. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms," Deut. xxxiii 27. He will fight your battles, heal your wounds, refresh your fainting spirits, guide you by his counsel while here, and at last receive you to himself.

May we not therefore say, Happy are the people that are in such a case! happy they, who have been enabled to accept this gracious invitation, who have already entered upon the rest of grace, and have a well-grounded expectation that they shall rest in glory! Believers, what should you fear, or why complain? Look back to where the Lord found you sleeping in, helpless and hopeless, yet insensible of your danger: look forward to what he has provided for you, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; a crown of life, a kingdom that cannot be shaken: think of the love, the suffering, the glory of him to whom you owe these blessings; and let these considerations animate you to run with patience and thankfulness the race that is set before you, Heb. xii. 1.

Happy likewise are you, whose hearts are fixed upon this rest, and this Saviour, though as yet you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. The Lord will give you rest. Doubt it not; he cannot deny himself; wait his hour; though he seem to tarry long, yet maintain your confidence in his promise. Redouble your prayers, cry mightily to him, he will not (as perhaps many around you do) rebuke your importunity, and charge you to hold your peace. Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise that called upon him?

And you, who are yet strangers to rest, are thus far happy, that you are still spared, and have the gospel continued to you. The Lord is still waiting to be gracious; he says to all, Come unto me, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Do you not see this rest desirable? What rest, either here or hereafter, can you expect, if you remain in the service of sin? Why may not you obtain your liberty? You are no worse than others, either by nature or practice. Though you have been transgressors from the womb, you are not excluded, if you do not exclude yourselves: though your sinful habits and inclinations are exceeding strong, he is able to subdue them. There is a power in his blood, and in that Spirit which he is exalted to bestow, sufficient to make the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots (Jer. xiii. 23.), to soften the hardest heart, and to pardon the most aggravated guilt, and to enable those to do good who have been accustomed to do evil. Arise, he calleth you. O may he accompany the outward call of his word with the efficacious power of his grace, that you may this instant obey his voice, and flee to him for refuge! Whither can you flee else? Who but Jesus can save you from the wrath to come? Be wise, and delay no longer. "But if you will not hear, mine eye shall weep for you in secret places," Jer. xiii. 17. If you will not come to Jesus for life, you must die. If you are out of Christ, God is angry with you every day. The curse of his broken law lies heavy upon you, whether you are asleep or awake, abroad or at home, at the market or in the church. The wrath of God is revealed against you; if you turn not, he will whet his sword (Psal. vii. 12.); he hath bent his bow, and made it ready: he hath prepared the instruments of death to smite you; he hath ordained the arrows of his vengeance against you: And can you, dare you, go on in your sins, and say, I shall have peace? O may you be wise in time! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. "Consider this, ye that forget him, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Psal. l. 22.

SERMON XII.

OF THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. MATTH. xi. 29.

THOSE who are enabled to come unto Christ, not only experience a change of state, but of character, disposition, and practice. They are not only freed from condemnation, but they are made partakers of a divine nature. They are delivered from the slavery and yoke of Satan, and made willing in the day of the Lord's power, to accept and embrace his yoke, which is commended to us in the following verse, as easy and pleasant. Our Lord speaks of his service as a yoke or burden, because it is so esteemed by all who know him not. They account him a hard master, and think his service wearisome; but those who have made the experiment, find it otherwise: though, it must be confessed, it exposes to some difficulties, calls for the daily exercise of self-denial, and will not admit either of competition or composition with the world, nor

can be pleasing to the unrenewed part of our nature. But the knowledge of his love, the hope of glory, and those seasonable refreshments with which he is pleased to favour those who come unto him, sweeten every bitter thing, and make them willing to bear his yoke, and to prefer it to all that the world accounts freedom.

Let us inquire,

1. What is meant by the yoke of Christ?

2. The proper means by which we are enabled to take it upon us; that is, the believing consideration of him, as our effectual teacher and perfect pattern.

3. The happy effect of bearing his yoke: We shall find rest to our souls.

I. The yoke of Christ, taken at large, includes all the dependence, obedience, and submission which we owe him, as our rightful Lord and gracious Redeemer. He has a double right to us; "he made us," Psal. c. 3. We are the creatures of his power: he gave us our being, with all our capacities and enjoyments. And farther, "he bought us" (Acts, xx. 28.); he pitied us in our low and fallen state, and gave his own life, his precious blood, to ransom us from that ruin and misery which was the just desert of our sins. There is good reason, therefore, that we should be his, and live and cleave to him in love alone; that we should no longer live to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again. In particular, we may consider,

1. The yoke of his profession. This is very pleasing to a gracious soul, so far as faith is in exercise. Far from being ashamed of the gospel of Christ, he is ready and willing to tell all who will hear, what God has done for his soul. Many young converts, in the first warmth of their affection, have more need of a bridle than of a spur in this concern. For want of prudence to time things rightly, and perhaps for want of more tenderness mixed with their zeal, they are apt to increase their own troubles, and sometimes, by pushing things too far, to obstruct the success of their well-meant endeavours to convince others. But though this is a fault, it is a fault on the right side, which time, experience, and observation, will correct. And though we are hasty enough to condemn the irregular overflowings of a heart deeply impressed with a sense of eternal things, I doubt not but the Lord, who owns and approves the main principle from whence they spring, beholds them with a far more favourable eye than he does the cold, cautious, temporizing conduct of some others, who value themselves upon their prudence. We should judge thus, if we had servants of our own. If we had one who was heartily and affectionately devoted to our interests, always ready to run by night or by day, refusing no danger or difficulty, from a desire to please us, though sometimes, through ignorance or inattention, he should make a mistake, we should prefer him to another of greater knowledge and abilities, who was always slow and backward, and discovered at least as much care to save himself from inconveniences as to promote our service. However, this warm zeal usually suffers abatement; we are flesh as well as spirit; and there are some circumstances attending a profession of the gospel, on the account of which it may be with propriety termed a yoke to us who have so many remaining evils within us, and so many outward temptations to call them forth. It will certainly stir up opposition from the world, and may probably break in upon our dearest connections, and threaten our most necessary temporal interests, 2 Tim. iii. 12; Matth. x. 36.

2. The yoke of his precepts. These the gracious soul approves and delights in; but still we are renewed but in part. And when the commands of Christ stand in direct opposition to the will of man, or call upon us to sacrifice a right hand or a right eye; though the Lord will surely make those who depend upon him victorious at the last, yet it will cost them a struggle; so that, when they are sensible how much they owe to his power working in them, and enabling them to overcome they will, at the same time, have a lively conviction of their own weakness. Abraham believed in God, and delighted to obey; yet when he was commanded to sacrifice his only son, this was no easy trial of his sincerity and obedience; and all who are partakers of his faith are exposed to meet, sooner or later, with some call of duty little less contrary to the dictates of flesh and blood.

3. The yoke of his dispensations. This none can bear as they ought, but those who come to him. It is natural to us to repine, to fret, and toss like a wild bull in a net (Isa. li. 20.), when we are under afflictions. Believers likewise find their flesh weak, when their spirits are willing; yet they see sufficient reasons to submission, and they know where to apply for grace. Affliction is a touchstone that discovers what spirit a man is of. The hypocrite may keep up a fair semblance of true piety, while all things go smooth and to his wish; but in sharp troubles the mask will drop off. Satan proceeded upon this maxim in his contest with Job; and the maxim is a truth, though Satan was mistaken in the application.

II. The appointed means by which sinners are enabled to bear this threefold yoke, is suggested in the words, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." However amiable and desirable the disposition I have described may appear, you will never acquire it by any strength, wisdom, or diligence of your own Our Lord, to prevent you wearying yourselves with unsuccessful efforts and needless disappointments, has assured you beforehand.

"Without me ye can do nothing" John xv. 5. But here he graciously offers you the assistance you need. As if he had said, I know you are unable of yourselves, but I will help you. Be not afraid of the prospect, but consider what I can do. To my power all things are easy; I can make the crooked straight, and the rough smooth; I can sweetly engage your affections, subdue your wills; influence your practice, and deliver you from your sinful fears. Consider likewise what I have done; thousands, who by nature were as unskilful and impatient as yourselves, have been made willing in the day of my power.

Therefore, *Learn of me.*—Be not afraid to come to me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. Great and mighty as I am, you may freely apply to me in every doubt and difficulty. Awakened souls, through a sense of guilt, and the power of unbelief, are backward and unwilling to come to Christ. They think, surely he will take no notice of such a one as I am. But observe how kind and condescending is his invitation; how graciously suited to engage our confidence! It was said of a Roman emperor, that those who durst speak to him were ignorant of his greatness, but those who durst not were still more ignorant of his goodness. This was a false and impious compliment when applied to a sinful mortal; but it is justly applicable to Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. His glorious majesty may well fill our hearts with awe, and humble us unto the dust before him: but his immense compassions, tenderness, and love, are revealed, to overbalance our fears, to give us confidence to draw nigh to him, and an encouraging hope that he will draw nigh to us.

Again, *Learn of me.*—I know the cause why these things appear so hard. It is owing to the pride and impatience of your hearts. To remedy this, take me for your example; I require nothing of you but what I have performed before you, and on your account: in the path I mark out for you, you may perceive my own footsteps all the way. This is a powerful argument, a sweet recommendation of the yoke of Christ, to those who love him, that he bore it himself. He is not like the Pharisees, whom he censured (Matt. xxiii. 4.) on this very account, who bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers.

1. Are you terrified with the difficulties attending your profession, disheartened by hard usage, or too ready to shew resentment against those who oppose you? Learn of Jesus, imitate and admire his constancy: "Consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself," Heb. xii. 3. Make a comparison (so the word * imports) between yourself and him, between the contradiction which he endured, and that which you are called to struggle with, then surely you will be ashamed to complain. Admire and imitate his meekness: when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; he wept for his enemies, and prayed for his murderers. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

2. Do you find it hard to walk stedfastly in his precepts, especially in some particular instances, when the maxims of worldly prudence, and the pleadings of flesh and blood, are strongly against you? Learn of Jesus. He pleased not himself (Rom. xv. 3.), he considered not what was safe and easy, but what was the will of his heavenly Father. Intreat him to strengthen you with strength in your soul, that as you bear the name of his disciples, you may resemble him in every part of your conduct, and shine as lights in a dark and selfish world, to the glory of his grace.

3. Are you tempted to repine at the dispensations of divine providence? Take Jesus for your pattern. Did he say, when the unspeakable sufferings he was to endure for sinners were just coming upon him, "The cup which my Father has put into my hands shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) and shall we presume to have a will of our own? especially when we further reflect, that as his sufferings were wholly on our account, so all our sufferings are by his appointment, and all designed by him to promote our best, that is, our spiritual and eternal welfare?

It is thus by looking to Jesus that the believer is enlightened and strengthened, and grows in grace and sanctification, according to that passage of St. Paul, "We all with open face," or unvailed face, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. The word of God is a glass in which the goodness and beauty of the Lord Jesus are manifested to the eye of faith by the light of the Holy Spirit. In this wonderful glass the whole object is not seen at once, but every view we take strengthens the sight to discover something not perceived before. And the prospect is not only affecting, but transforming; by beholding we are gradually formed into the resemblance of him whom we see, admire, and love. All those whom Jesus thus teaches to bear his yoke, find his promise fulfilled; they obtain,

III. Rest to their souls. Those who are truly awakened want nothing to make them happy, but to be assured that they have an interest in the Redeemer's love. Now, this satisfaction is peculiar to those who take his yoke upon them, and are daily learning of him, and copying after him. For,

1. This affords the best and most unshaken evidence that he has begun a good

* Ἀντιπαράβαλε.

work of grace in our hearts: I say the best, because the most unshaken. Many are greatly perplexed to know if they are truly converted; and are kept the longer in suspense, because they overlook the ordinary scriptural method of confirmation. They expect to know it by some extraordinary sensation suddenly impressed upon their minds. But besides that there have been many instances in which this expected evidence has been counterfeited, and a groundless confidence has been placed in a delusion or vain imagination (to the hurt of many, if not to their overthrow), even when they are from the gracious Spirit of God, they are for the most part transient; and when a different frame takes place, the believer is often tempted to question the reality of what went before. I think therefore the testimony of an enlightened conscience, judging by the word of God, and deciding in our favour, that by his grace we have been enabled to take up the yoke of Christ, is in some respects a more satisfactory evidence, that we are his, and that he is ours, than if an angel was sent from heaven to tell us, that our names are written in the book of life.

2. The promise of the peculiar manifestation of his love (John. xiv. 21.), is made and restricted to those who walk in the path of obedience. If the discoveries the Lord is pleased sometimes to make of himself to the soul, are not the proper and direct evidences of a state of grace, they are however exceedingly desirable. Whoever has tasted the sweets of that water of life, cannot but long for repeated draughts. When he lifts up the light of his countenance upon the soul, then is love, joy, and peace within, however dark and distressing things may be without. But this desirable presence can only be expected, while we bear his yoke, and walk in his steps. If we turn aside into forbidden paths, if we decline or dishonour the profession of his truth, we grieve the Holy Spirit, on whose communications our comforts are suspended; we give the enemies of our souls encouragement to assault us, and are in danger of falling from one wickedness to another, without the power of withstanding either the greatest or the smallest temptation, till the Lord is pleased to turn again to our assistance. In such a situation there can be no rest. "But he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely, and findeth rest," Prov. x. 9.

And true rest is no otherwise to be obtained. Those of you who refuse the yoke of Christ, well know in yourselves that you are far from rest. Your experience agrees with this declaration in the prophet: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii. 21. In what respect will you dare to pretend that you have the advantage of those who bear the yoke of Christ?

We allow, the profession of the gospel is subject to inconveniences, but surely not to so many as you meet with who are ashamed, or afraid, or averse to maintain it. If those who are of your household are not your foes on this account, yet we can see how it fares with those who live without the fear of God. How many, and how sharp are your trials from disobedient children, unfaithful servants, false friendships, ungoverned passions, and unsatisfied desires! Nor do you save anything in point of character, not even with those by whom you are most desirous to be esteemed. They cannot indeed reproach you with being a believer, but may they not, do they not reproach and despise you for being a drunkard, or a liar, or a miser, or an extortioner? And is this more honourable than to suffer shame for the cause of Christ?

Do the precepts of Christ seem hard? Certainly not so hard as that miserable bondage you are under to Satan, the god of this world, who works in you, and rules over you at his will. He will not allow you to listen to the united remonstrances of conscience, health, interest, and reputation. But you are hurried on in his drudgery, constrained, like a mill-horse, to toil in the same tedious round of folly and sin, though you are aware of the consequences and wages beforehand. How absurd is it for you to boast of your freedom, while you are compelled to rush into present misery, and to dare your eternal ruin, with your eyes open!

And how greatly are you to be pitied under the many unavoidable afflictions of life, to which you are equally liable with the servants of Christ! When your idols are torn from you, when sickness seizes you, or death stares you in the face, then how do you fret and pine! how many are your fears and alarms! Then you are your own tormentors. The review of the past affords you only shame and regret. If you look forward to the future, you are filled with forboding fears and distressing apprehensions; you are weary of living and afraid to die.

Why then will you continue thus, when Jesus says, "Come unto me, that you may have rest?" O may he incline your hearts this day to hear his voice! Have you been hardened in your evil ways by a suspicion that your case is desperate, that it is now too late, and that he whom you have so often rejected will refuse you mercy? Beware of such a thought: "There is foregiveness with him," Ps. cxxx. 4. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." He is gracious to pardon and mighty to save; only acknowledge your offences, and throw down the arms of your rebellion. He is mighty to save, and no less willing than able. As yet there is hope, but who can tell how long his patience may bear with you? Take notice of that awful denunciation, "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without re-

medy," Prov. xxix. 1. If you seek him to-day with all your hearts, you shall find him. But who can answer for to-morrow? To-morrow, or to-night, your souls may be required of you; or, if your lives are spared, you may be given up to judicial and incurable hardness of heart. If his Spirit should cease from striving with you, you are lost for ever.

SERMON XIII.

THE SERVICE OF CHRIST EASY AND PLEASANT.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
MATTH. xi 30.

THIS verse alone, if seriously attended to, might convince multitudes, that though they bear the name of Christians, and are found among the Lord's worshipping people, they are as yet entire strangers to the religion of the gospel. Can it be supposed that our Lord would give a false character of his yoke? If not, how can any dream that they are his followers while they account a life of communion with God, and entire devotedness to his service, to be dull and burdensome? Those, however, who have made the happy trial, find it to be such a burden as wings are to a bird. Far from complaining of it, they are convinced that there is no real pleasure attainable in any other way.

What the yoke of Christ is, we have already considered. It includes the profession of his gospel, obedience to his precepts, and submission to his will under every dispensation. But since it is confessed that a sinful nature and a sinful world will bring many difficulties, trials, and temptations upon all who walk in this way, it may be worth our while to inquire more particularly what there is in the yoke of Christ that overpowers all these hardships, and makes such amends for every suffering, that, upon the whole, every believer will subscribe to this as a sure and experienced truth, that the "yoke is easy, and the burden light."

I. Those who bear the yoke of Christ act from a principle which makes all things easy. This is love. It is said of Jacob, that when he served a hard master seven years for Rachel, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love which he bare her, Gen. xxix. 20. And many of you find it easy to do much for your parents, children, and friends, because you love them. But there is no love like that which a redeemed sinner bears to him who "has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood." Farther, love produces the greatest effects when it is mutual. We are willing to do and suffer much to gain the affection of a person we regard, though we are not sure of success; but when the affection is reciprocal, it adds strength to every motive. Now, the believer does not love at uncertainties: he knows that Jesus loved him first, loved him when he was in a state of enmity (1 John iv. 19); and that nothing but the manifestation and power of this love could have taught his hard, unfeeling heart to love him whom he never saw, 1 Pet. i. 8. This love, therefore, affords two sweet and powerful encouragements in service.

1. A cordial desire to please. Love does what it can, and is only sorry that it can do no more. We seldom think much, as I have hinted already, either of time, pains, or expense, when the heart is warmly engaged. The world, who understand not this heart-felt spring of true religion, think it strange that the believer will not run into the same excess of riot with them, 1 Pet. iv. 4. They wonder what pleasure he can find in secret prayer, in reading and hearing the word of God; they pity the poor man who has such a melancholy turn, and gravely advise him not to carry things too far. But the believer can give them a short answer in the apostle's words: "The love of Christ constrains me," 2 Cor. v. 14. His ruling passion is the same with theirs, which makes his pursuit no less uniform and abiding; but the objects are as different as light from darkness. They love the perishing pleasures of sin, the mammon of unrighteousness, and the praise of men; but he loves Jesus.

2. A pleasing assurance of acceptance. If we know not whether what we do will be favourably received or not, it makes us remiss and indifferent. But this animates the Lord's people; they are assured, that he will not overlook the smallest services or sufferings they are engaged in for his sake. He has told them in his word, That if they give but a cup of cold water in his name, and on his account, he will accept and acknowledge it, as if it were done immediately to himself, Mark ix. 41.

II. It makes a service still more easy and pleasant, if besides acting from a principle of love, the service itself is agreeable to our inclination. Esau would probably have done any thing to please his father, in hopes of obtaining the blessing; but no command could please him more than to be sent for venison, because he was a cunning hunter, and his pleasure lay in that way, Gen. xxv. 27. and xxvii. 3. Now, the believer has received a new nature; so that the Lord's commandments are not grievous to him, but he delights in them with his whole heart. It is true, he groans under remaining corruptions; and this is properly his burden, not the service of Christ, which he approves and delights in, but because he can serve him no better. So far as faith is in exercise, he rejoices in every part of the yoke of Christ. He glories in the profession of his name. He has made Moses choice; he prefers even the reproach of Christ

to all the honours of the world (Heb. xi. 26.); and has a measure of that spirit, by which the apostles were enabled to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts v. 41. He heartily consents to the precepts; he esteems them as a light to his feet; he makes them his meditation all the day. Nothing pleases him more than to find an increasing victory over the hindrances to his obedience; and the time of his greatest grief is, when, through infirmity, or the prevalence of temptation, he is seduced to neglect or transgress them, though in the smallest instance, and in what does not pass under human observation. Even afflictions, though not joyous in themselves, but grievous, are cheerfully submitted to, because the Lord has appointed them, and is pleased to account them a filling up of his sufferings, Col. i. 24.

III. In other cases, even when there is a principle of love, and the service not disagreeable in itself, yet weakness may render it wearisome or impracticable. Though perhaps you would willingly take a long journey to serve a friend; yet if you are sick or lame, what could you do? But the yoke of Christ is light and easy in this respect, that there is a sufficiency of strength provided for the performance. This consideration makes every difficulty vanish; for though these should be increased tenfold, yet if strength be increased in an equal proportion, it amounts to the same thing. What is hard or impossible to a child, is easy to a man; what is hard to flesh and blood, is easy to faith and grace. The believer, though weak in himself, is strong in the Lord. The power on which he depends is not in his own keeping; but it is treasured up in the covenant of grace, or in the Lord Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells, and is always to be obtained by prayer. Every child of God is interested in the blessing of Asher: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy day is, so shall thy strength be," Deut. xxxiii. 25. By the day may be understood,

1. A day of service. Whatever the Lord appoints for us to do, if we depend upon him in the use of appointed means, he will certainly qualify, furnish, and strengthen us, for the accomplishment of it. If David is called out to meet Goliah, though he is but a stripling (1 Sam. xvii. 37.), and the other a practised warrior from his youth, he shall not be disheartened or overcome, but be made a conqueror though all appearances are against him. If we are in the path of duty, and if our help and hope is in the name of the Lord, we may confidently expect that he will uphold us, however faint and enfeebled we may seem to be to ourselves or others.

2. A day of suffering. If, like Daniel and his companions, we should be threatened with lions and flames, we may confidently commit our way to God; he can controul the fire, and stop the lions mouth, Dan. iii. 16. and vi. 22; Psal. xci. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 17 While all things are in his hands, whose we are, and whom we serve, why should we fear that they will act beyond the bounds of his permission, or that he will permit them to do any thing which is not his purpose to over-rule to his advantage? Such considerations in the hour of need, seasonably impressed by his good Spirit, together with a trust in his promises, shall inspire us with new strength to meet the greatest danger undismayed; and with regard to trials immediately from his own gracious hand, he will so adjust them, in number, season, weight, and measure, to the ability he communicates, that we both shall be able to bear, and also find a way made for us to escape. With such assurances, we may boldly say, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man (or Satan) can do unto me."

IV. There is further, a consideration of profit and advantage, which makes the yoke of Christ easy. The believing soul is not mercenary. He loves his master and his service; yet it is impossible to serve God for nought. In the keeping of his commandments, there is a reward, though not of debt, yet of grace (Psal. xix. 11.): A great and sure reward, respecting both the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Those who sincerely take up the yoke of Christ, and cleave to him in love alone, have ample compensation in the present life for all that their profession can cost them. They enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, which is compared to a continual feast. St. Paul, though a champion for free grace, and determined to glory only in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (2 Cor. i. 12.), expresses a high and just value for this privilege; and that it afforded comfort, yea joy, in a time of trouble. Superadded to this, they are often favoured with the peculiar consolations of the Holy Spirit, which, though slightly esteemed by those who know them not, satisfy the soul as with marrow and fatness, and can change the voice of mourning into songs of praise in an instant, Psal. lxiii. 3. And though these are not their constant food, yet they have real and habitual communion with God, from day to day, in his ordinances and providences. They live in his presence; they converse with him, and he with them; their good things are doubly pleasing, because they receive them from his hand; and this thought likewise sweetens every bitter cup of affliction which he prepares for their good. The mutual intercourse and communion his people have with each other, is likewise a considerable branch of their present reward. How pleasing is it, when speaking to each other in his name, they take sweet counsel together! they are confirmed in his way, by finding how their experiences answer as face to face in a glass; and he causes their hearts to burn within them, while they are freely declaring what he has

done for their souls. Lastly, they are happy in a comfortable expectation of a better world, (Gen. xix. 18.); and when the appointed time comes, death will put an end to all their troubles; and then shall they fully know and possess the future reward which the Lord has prepared and reserved for them that love him.

This is briefly summed up by the apostle: They shall be absent from the body (2 Cor. v. 8), and all its inseparable evils; sin and sorrow, want, pain, and every distress that belongs to this mortal state, shall affect them no more; and they shall be present with the Lord, whom they love. Then they shall see his face without a cloud, and share his joy without abatement or interruption; and all this shall be for ever. When they are made pillars of the new Jerusalem (Rev. iii. 12; 1 Thess. iv. 17.), they shall come out no more. The prospect of this makes them rejoice under all their tribulations; for they know whereto they lead, and how they will end. "These light and momentary afflictions are working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

From these things I hope it will appear that the yoke of Christ is easy. His people serve him because they love him; they love his ways: he is their strength; he comforts them now, and will be their portion for ever.

But perhaps some, whom I would willingly comfort, will rather be discouraged by this representation, and say, Alas! if it is thus, I am yet to seek. My love is so faint, my strength so feeble, my consolations so small, my obedience so imperfect, that I am afraid I have not known the easy yoke of Christ. There are therefore some other things to be taken into the account, and which are no just exception to the character our Lord here gives of his yoke.

1. The entrance, or first application of the mind to the yoke, or profession of the gospel, is seldom pleasant. Though the work of grace leads to love, it usually begins in fear. On this point we have already spoken at large. It is no pleasing state to be weary and heavy laden, to see ourselves obnoxious to a curse, and unable to escape; yet, by apprehensions of this kind, the soul is prepared to embrace the yoke of Christ; and none but those who have experienced the misery of a fallen state, will be truly desirous of the gospel-rest.

2. The progress is gradual. The first dawnings of grace in the heart are faint, and hardly perceptible; hence the whole process is compared to things that are very inconsiderable in their first principles. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which is hid and lost in the earth for a season; it is like leaven, which when cast into meal may be concealed and unnoticed for a while, but by degrees diffuses its influence through the whole mass (Matth. xiii. 31, 33); it is like the corn, which springs up and comes forward night and day, a man knows not how, Mark iv. 27. The growth in the christian life being thus slow and indistinct, many who aim to ascertain their interest rather by the degree than the reality of grace, are often dejected to find their attainments proceed no faster. It is indeed a humbling consideration, but ought not to rob us of the comfort arising from a believing view of what Jesus has completely wrought out for us, and of what he has promised he will infallibly perform in us, in his own good time. A deliverance from this poring into ourselves for the grounds of our hope, is a part, a considerable part of the rest to which he invites us.

3. The difficulties attendant on that course of faith and obedience, which is included in taking his yoke upon us, are many and great. While we sojourn in a wilderness-state, and in a sinful nature, there will be fightings without and fears within. It is the appointed and necessary rule of our profession, that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God," Acts xiv. 22. All who are against him will be against us for his sake, and the evil heart of unbelief will shew itself in a variety of forms, as it is acted upon by various impressions, from the things of sense and the powers of darkness. But these troubles do not arise from the spiritual yoke of Christ, but from our present situation and circumstances, and shall therefore shortly cease for ever. His ways are ways of pleasantness, though we are sure to meet with perplexity and uneasiness, so far and so often as we wander from them into our own crooked paths. But,

4. The end is sure. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matth. x. 22); and all who are in his way, have his promise and power engaged in their behalf, that they shall certainly endure, that he will so lead, guide, support, and strengthen them, that neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come, shall separate them from his love, Rom. viii. 38. Your complaints and fears, therefore, are no proof that you are not right. Go on, in his name. Trust in him in whom you have believed, and be nothing terrified by your adversaries. The longer you wear the yoke, the easier you will find it.

Let each one examine himself by what has been offered. If you have not a principle of true love to Christ, and a prevailing desire to live in all holy obedience to his will, you are no christian; and, though you may begin warmly, you will not be able to hold out, but your profession will wither away for want of root and moisture. Nor is it difficult to know whether you love him or no; if you do, you have seen your need of him, and abhor yourself in dust and ashes.

From hence likewise you may discern the difference between the religion of the gospel

and the formal worship that many are contented with, in which the heart has no place. Remember that "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24), and unless you love him, you cannot possibly please him. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned. His commandments likewise are spiritual; they extend beyond the surface of the outer conduct, and take cognisance even of the retired thoughts and intents of the heart. Many sins may be avoided, and many duties performed, from motives and principles which, not being derived from his word, or conformable to it, are therefore sinful in themselves, and make every thing proceeding from them defective and displeasing in his sight. If you are attempting to serve him by your own natural strength and understanding, be assured that you have not yet taken up the yoke of Christ; if you had, you would find it answerable to the character he has given of it, for his word is truth. But your constrained obedience you know in yourselves, far from being easy and light, is a heavy burden, which you would be glad to cast off if you durst. You serve the Lord as a slave serves a hard master, not with a willing mind, but of necessity, and from a dread of punishment. But in vain do you draw near to him with your lips while your heart is far from him. Therefore spend no longer your labour for that which is not bread, but come to Jesus, that you may find rest for your souls. He is able to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, to put a new spirit in you that shall delight in his yoke, to give you strength and ability for every part of your duty, and to make you a willing people in the day of his power.

Believers, rejoice in your security. The Lord has given you a never-dying principle of love, and provided for you a never-failing supply of grace. These will bear you up through all your journey, and at last bring you safely home to the mansions provided for you in your Father's house. Then shall you praise him, world without end.

SERMON XIV.

BELIEVERS CAUTIONED AGAINST MISCONDUCT IN THEIR PROFESSION.

Let not your good be evil spoken of
ROM. xiv. 16.

THE immediate occasion of this caution you may learn from the context. It has pleased God from the beginning, to permit his people, who all agree in the great and essential truths of the gospel, to differ in some things of less importance. This difference of judgment gives room for the mutual exercise of patience, forbearance, tenderness, and charity, but, at the same time, too often affords opportunity for the remaining corruptions of the heart to discover and exert themselves. The Jewish converts were for some time attached to the observance of that distinction in meats and drinks which had been enjoyed by the law of Moses: the Gentiles, on the contrary, claimed a right to be free from this yoke, as a part of the liberty which they had received from Christ. The apostle does not in this place blame either party with respect to their own judgment and practice; but he reproves them for censuring and despising each other, and he especially reproves those who understood their liberty in the gospel, for not being prudent in the use of it, but rather forward to provoke and offend their weaker brethren. He confirms their liberty, but admonishes them not to abuse it, either by urging others to act against their consciences, or by treating them with contempt, because they had not entirely laid aside these scruples and prejudices to which they had been long accustomed. "Let not your good be evil spoken of." Be thankful for your liberty, but do not bring it into discredit and reproach, by acting in an unbecoming spirit towards others.

The instruction in my text, understood in this sense, has always been applicable and seasonable in the christian church, and perhaps never more so than in our land and in our times. While believers in Jesus, who are led by the same Spirit into the same fundamental truths, and stand in the most endeared relation to each other through their common Head, place such undue stress upon lesser incidental differences, and are professed partisans for the little interests of systems, denominations, and leaders, love, the grand characteristic of their profession, is hardly discernable; they censure and grieve each other, retard the success of the cause which they would all be thought to have most at heart, and open the mouths of the adversaries to revile that which they understand not. The prevalence of this wrong disposition calls for the admonition in my text. Be thankful for your privileges; you not only claim the rights of private judgment and liberty of conscience, as men and as christians, but as Britons you possess them. "Let not then your good be evil spoken of;" allow to others that freedom which you expect yourselves; and, if you do not suppose yourselves infallible, suppose it possible that some may be as near to the Lord as yourselves, who cannot agree with you in every sentiment you have adopted.

But this direction may be taken in a much more general sense. It behoves all who honour the Lord Jesus Christ to be careful in every part of their conduct, that they do not give occasion for their good to be evil spoken

of. To make the subject as suitable as I can to the different states and characters of all present, I shall,

1. Inquire what is the believer's good.

2. Explain and apply the advice here given, "Let not your good be evil spoken of."

I. All mankind have something near at heart, on which their dependence is placed, and wherein they find their chief pleasure. This (whatever it is) is their good; and, according to the object in which they delight, is their proper character. By nature the world and worldly things are the highest good we seek after; and these, in one view or other, as tempers and situations vary, are pursued with unwearied earnestness. Riches, honours, sinful pleasures, are the poor things in view, when the unrenewed heart cries out, in its eager pursuits, "Who will shew us any good?" Psal. iv. 6. If your strongest desires tend this way, your good will not be evil spoken of by many. Men will praise you when you do well for yourself; you are not therefore concerned in the admonition of my text. Only take notice what the word of God declares of your good, and of you for accounting it so. Your good is vanity, your fruit is vexation of spirit, and you who set your hearts on such a good as the objects of sense can furnish, are adjudged "enemies to God," James iv. 4. You yourselves will speak evil of this good when you come to die, if you die in your sins. Then you will see a propriety in Esau's words to your own case, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Gen. xxv. 23.

As the world is the good of the unconverted, so a covenant God in Christ is the good and portion of all who are called by his grace. They are ever looking to the obedience and blood of Jesus, applied by the Spirit of grace, as the sole foundation of their hope and comfort. God is their good in the highest sense, and every thing else is good, so far as it leads to him, and assists them in maintaining communion with him. In this view we may mention several particulars, each of which they account their good, because the means of enjoying and glorifying their God.

1. The gospel, that gracious revelation by which they have been taught to know themselves, and to know Jesus, is their good. All the doctrines, precepts, and promises, contained in the scriptures, are a very precious treasure, in which they rejoice more than those who find great spoil. Each of them can say, in the language of the Psalmist, "The law of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day long," Psal. cxix. 72, 97, 103. By this word they are enlightened, quickened, warned, comforted, and supported; therefore it is the joy and rejoicing of their hearts, and more than their necessary food, Job xxiii. 12.

2. The ordinances make a part of their good. A famine of the word of the Lord would distress them greatly; and if they may but have frequent opportunities of this kind, and meet with his gracious presence in them, they can be content to be without many things which the men of this world highly value. When beset with many straits, and surrounded with troubles, they can find refreshmen. in the Lord's assurance by the prophet, "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more; but thine eyes shall see thy teachers," Isa. xxx. 20. If this promise is fulfilled to them, they will not greatly complain of the bread of adversity, although that is joined with it. But on the contrary, they find it a hard trial to be deprived of lively ordinances and faithful ministers, however advantageous and pleasing their situation may be in temporal things, because these are not their good.

3. They account their profession a part of their good. They esteem it a high privilege to bear the name of Christ, though it exposes them to the reproach of the world. They account it a great and important trust to have the honour of the gospel committed to them, and in some measure dependent on their conduct. When they are in their right minds, they would rather die than be guilty of any thing that might bring it into discredit. Wilfully they cannot, they dare not do it; but through ignorance and infirmity they are prone to mistake, and therefore need, and are desirous to observe, the caution in my text.

4. Their experiences are their good, their choice pearls; I mean, the inward dealings of the Lord with their souls: the proofs they have had of his power and wisdom in bringing them thus far safely on their way to his kingdom, the discoveries he has given them of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, the manifestations of his grace, love, and nearness to them, notwithstanding all their unworthiness and unfaithfulness. Some of these experiences have cost them dear, have cost them many a pang, trouble, and conflict; yet they would not be without them to avoid all that they have suffered; and they are content to suffer on, if by any means they may increase this precious stock. They delight to recollect how low they were brought, how wonderfully delivered, what answers they have been favoured with to their poor prayers; and from hence to collect the all-sufficiency and goodness of him to whom they have fled for refuge, and to derive arguments wherewith to combat their unbelieving fears in time to come. Thus far their experiences are their good; not as the foundation of their hope, or the source of their comfort, for these their whole reliance is on the obedience and blood

of Jesus the Saviour; but as evidences, that they have neither "followed cunningly-devised fables, nor received the grace of God in vain," 2 Pet. i. 16.; 2 Cor. vi. 1.

Thus much in general, that you may all have something whereby to try your spirits, and to know whether you have embraced the good of the Lord's chosen people, Psal. cvi. 4, 5. If your good does not lie in such things as I have mentioned, you have no durable riches, nothing but what you must soon leave behind you. Can you be content to be stript of all, and to enter poor, naked, and friendless, into an eternal world? O that you would take our Lord's advice! He might command, for he has all authority: but he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see," Rev. iii. 18.

But some there are whose hearts can go along with me in what I have said. The great God himself is your good. His word and ordinances, your profession of his name, and your experience of his goodness, are what you rejoice in. To you, then, I address the rest of my discourse. "Let not your good be evil spoken of." I am,

II. To explain and apply this advice. The words plainly imply two things:

1. That there are many ready enough to speak evil of your good: many who despise the gospel, and you for professing it; they watch for your halting, and will be glad of the smallest occasion to expose you. The world, that loves its own, will make allowances in other cases. Indiscretions, and even vices, will be charged to the account of human infirmity, and the amiable name of candour shall be employed to conceal or palliate such things as can by no means be justified. But if you are a professed believer in Jesus, you must not expect this candour will be extended to you; rather, all your words and actions will be sifted, your mistakes exaggerated; and if any part of your conduct will bear a double construction, it will generally be viewed in the most unfavourable light. Nay, even when there is no just occasion afforded, falsehoods and calumnies have been, and will be, industriously propagated against the servants of Christ, Matth. v. 11. That it must be so, we are often warned by scripture, and it is abundantly confirmed by experience.

2. That though it is impossible wholly to stop the mouths of evil-minded men, yet they would not be able to talk so fast if the imprudence of believers did not too often afford them advantage. That such occasions should sometimes be given by those whose hearts and aims are in the main sincere, will not be thought strange to any person who is acquainted with the true state of human nature. Through inadvertence, want of experience, errors of judgment, sudden and unexpected temptations, and other evils inseparable from our present situation, persons, whose chief desire is to adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things, may, and do, in some instances cause their good to be evil spoken of. It is, however, our bounden duty, as we regard the honour of God and his truth, to endeavour as much as possible to cut off occasion from them that seek occasion in this respect, 2 Cor. xi. 12. . 1 Pet. ii. 12.

In order to this, let us inquire, what are the most common objections which are made against the gospel preaching and profession, not only by malicious enemies, but sometimes by persons who discover no very bad intention, but are partly imposed upon by the misrepresentations of others, and partly stumbled by the faults of professors?

1st, It is objected, that our doctrine lays no sufficient stress upon good works. We dare not indeed recommend them out of their proper place, or propose them as the ground of our acceptance with God. But I hope none who attend here will dare to say, that they are not frequently reminded, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. However, the world will judge more by what they see in you, than by what they hear from me. Be upon your guard, therefore, lest by any instances of a trifling, foolish, unkind, or unjust conduct, you let your good be evil spoken of. It will not be a sufficient apology to say, that your principles do not allow of these things, if those who know you can charge them upon your practice.

2dly, It is farther objected, that the evangelical system is a scheme chiefly made up of notions and subtle distinctions, and opens a door to a thousand disputes. This is one unhappy consequence of our many divisions and subdivisions, and the heat with which they are contended for by their respective partisans. Let this engage you to avoid a disputing contentious spirit. "Be swift to hear, slow to speak" (James i. 19.); and when a reason is asked "of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. iii. 15.), give your answers with meekness and fear, lest you cause your good to be evil spoken of.

3dly, It is likewise a very common objection, that an usual effect of this doctrine, is to make people idle and careless with regard to the necessary concerns and business of life. Indeed I should not be unwilling to plead with candid and fair reasoners, in behalf of young converts, on this point. At first setting out, the change is so great, their views of eternal things so strong and affecting, that, considering human infirmity, it can hardly be otherwise but that the attention will be almost entirely taken up with them for a season.

While a sense of unpardoned sin is fixed upon the conscience and a person now duly aware of the uncertainty of life, is in suspence about the greatest of all concerns, and knows not how or whether he shall be able to flee from the wrath to come, it is no wonder if this solicitude should in a great measure swallow up his thoughts, and leave him but little either leisure or ability to attend to other concerns, which, however proper in their respective places, are confessedly, in comparison of this, of little or no importance. In like manner, the removal of this burden is usually accompanied with such a lively sense of the wisdom, love, power, and grace of God, revealed in Christ Jesus by the gospel, as may for a little while almost overpower and extinguish the apprehension of inferior things. But if this indifference about common duties continues very long, or is indulged to an extreme, it gives great and just offence. It causes the ways of truth to be evil spoken of, and we hardly know what to say, but this, That the fault is not owing to the gospel, but to the neglect of what the gospel teaches and enjoins. This is no new inconvenience; the apostles observed and reproved it in their day. There were such mistaken persons among the Thessalonians, who supposed or pretended, that the gospel exempted them from labour. Of these he says, "Now them that are such we exhort and command, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread;" and farther directs, "that if they would not work, neither should they eat," 2 Thess. iii. 10.—12. The Sabbath is the Lord's; and the same commmand which forbids us to do any work then, requires us to labour on the other six days. "Let not your good be evil spoken of." Be faithful to your trust, diligent in your business, do every thing heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Give no one just cause to say, that since you have become religious, you care not (as the phrase is) which end goes foremost; for this would be to put a stumbling-block in their way, and to increase their prejudices against the truth.

4thly, Once more, the gospel-doctrine is charged with weakening the bands of natural and social relation; that it makes children and servants heady, high-minded, and disobedient, so that they presently think themselves wiser than all about them, and are obstinately bent to have their own wills. This objection will indeed cleave to the gospel, so long as the spirit of the world and the spirit of God are opposite to each other. For cases will inevitably arise, where we must either displease God or man, and then we ought not to hesitate a moment. But professors should take care to be assured that there is such a necessity, before they act against lawful authority; and especially when the point in dispute lies between children and parents. For though we ought to disobey and forsake father and mother when God's commands require it; yet next, under God, parents are, above all, to be honoured, consulted, and obeyed; and the excepted cases are not near so numerous as persons in the warmth of their first zeal are apt to suppose. The enemy suits his temptations to occasions; and it is no uncommon thing to be drawn to act violently in our own spirits, while we imagine we are striving in the cause of God and truth.

In short, we are directed to examine ourselves, and others are allowed to examine us by our fruits. The people of the world are not proper judges of spiritual experiences, but they can judge tolerably right of tempers and actions. Some will watch you out of ill-will, and some will observe you for information. If they hear you have begun to make a religious profession, they will take notice, to see if you are the better for it. They will observe you not only in the church, but in the shop and in the house; and if they perceive you are all of a piece, steady, quiet, humble, diligent, who knows but this may be a means in the hand of God to win upon them, and to give them a more favourable regard to the means which have wrought so effectually on you? But, on the contrary, if you are imprudent, rash, and careless, if you either conform to the world, or neglect your acknowledged duty in it, you will cause your good to be evil spoken of, bring difficulties upon yourselves, and put it out of your own power to be useful to others. Pray, therefore, for wisdom and grace, to make your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. This is the great design and proper effect of the gospel, when rightly understood. For as it is the grace of God alone which bringeth salvation; so this grace not only enlightens the understanding, but purifies the heart, regulates the conduct, works by love, and overcomes the world. It effectually teaches and enforces (what the best schemes of morality and philosophy have always failed in) the denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts (Tit. ii. 11—15.): and by the motives it displays, and the strength it communicates, enables the true christian to adorn his character in every relation, and to fill up the whole circle of duty as it respects himself, his neighbour, and the God with whom he has to do. It teaches to live soberly, righteously, and godly; to avoid whatever is contrary to the purity of the gospel; to practise moderation in the use even of lawful things; and to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. It teaches the rich to be humble and bountiful, the poor to be thankful and resigned. It teaches superiors to be kind, inferiors to be faithful. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, magistrates and people, are all instructed by this grace to a conduct an

swerable to their high calling, and the common relation they stand in to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. For the morality of the gospel has a nobler spring, and a more extensive scope, than the ties of social life. Their sobriety and righteousness are not substituted in the place of vital godliness, but are the fruits derived from it. The grace of God teaches them to live godly, to delight in him, to obey him, to do every thing for his sake, as under his eye, and to be continually governed by a sense of his unspeakable love manifested in his Son, and "an expectation of the blessed hope set before us, the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that by his blood and Spirit he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Labour to shew, that you are not only called by his name, but have sat at his feet, and drank of his Spirit; and if, after all, unreasonable and wicked men will speak evil of you and your good, be not moved at it, but pity and pray for them. When he shall return to vindicate your cause, and wipe away your reproach, then "every cloud shall be removed, and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," Matth. xiii. 43.

SERMON XV.

THE EXTENT AND SANCTION OF THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. EXOD. XX. 7.

THE foundation of true religion is laid in a right knowledge of God and ourselves. How deficient we are in each of these, how far fallen from original righteousness, is strongly implied in this prohibition, which would be wholly unnecessary, if we were not wholly sunk in stupidity and wickedness. That such worms as we should be liable to trifle with the Divine Majesty, whose presence fills the heavens and the earth, before whom the angels hide their faces; that such frail dependent creatures have need to be cautioned, that we do not profane the name of the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being, is a striking proof of our depravity; and that we can dare to break through this caution, and slight the awful threatening with which it is closed, is a dreadful aggravation of our guilt.

These words, when first spoken to the Israelites, were delivered in flames and thunder. The mountain shook, the people trembled; and even Moses, who had been honoured with peculiar freedom of access to God, was constrained to cry, "I exceedingly fear and quake," Heb. xii. 22. Such a scene, or rather an infinitely more dreadful one, shall hereafter take place, "when the Lord himself shall again descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God" (1 Thess. iv. 16.); "when he shall be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on all who know him not, and obey not his gospel" (2 Thess. i. 8.): "then shall sinners be convinced not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him" (Jude, 15.); and they shall know the full meaning of that terrible exception which I have read, "that the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

The terms of my text require little explanation. The name of God is in every one's mouth upon one occasion or other, in places where his revealed will is known. In a more eminent and peculiar sense, his name is discovered to his believing people in Christ Jesus the Lord; those who know the name of God in Christ will put their trust in him (Psal. ix. 10.); they dare not, they cannot, blaspheme that holy name by which they are called. But I shall take it more extensively here; for though but few understand the name of God in an evangelical and saving sense, there is not a person in this assembly but knows and makes mention of his holy name, so far as to render them transgressors of this commandment. To take his name in vain, is to use it falsely or profanely, inconsiderately, without due reverence, or unprofitably, and without a suitable necessity. The sanction, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless," has indeed a meaning and emphasis beyond what is expressed. Similar forms of speaking are frequent in scripture, as, "The Lord will not spare that man" (Deut. xxix. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5.); that is, he will punish him to the utmost; for it is immediately added, "All the curses of this book shall come upon him." Again, "He spared not the angels;" that is, he shewed them no mercy, as the following words declare: "He spared not the old world, he visited them with utter destruction, and swept them all away with a flood." So "he will not hold him guiltless," implies two things: 1st, That the Lord God has appointed a day to call sinners to an account for their words, as well as their actions. 2dly, That whatever shall become of others, those who have presumed to take his name in vain, have their doom already determined. Whoever escapes, they shall surely be punished; whomsoever he acquits, he will certainly condemn them.

As the import of the expressions is not difficult, so likewise it will be far more easy than agreeable to point out some of the many

ways in which this commandment is customarily and carelessly broken. The law is general, and each particular precept is spiritual (Rom. vii. 14); and perhaps this will be found of a more extensive signification than some of you are aware. The delightful theme of a minister of the gospel is to preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified; to open the treasures of divine mercy, and to shew the grace, freeness, and security of the promises; to raise up them that fall, to strengthen those that stand; "to support the weak, to comfort the feeble-minded; to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," 1 Thess. v. 14.; Luke iv. 18. But these subjects do not comprise the whole of our message; and in general we find that the full soul loatheth the honey-comb (Prov. xxvii 7.); and multitudes, through ignorance of the spirituality and purity of God's holy law, and a partial judgment of their own hearts, can neither see the beauty nor the necessity of the gospel-salvation. We are therefore constrained frequently to insist on far less pleasing subjects, to lift up our voices like a trumpet (Is. lviii. 1), to demand a general attention, while we attempt to shew our hearers their transgressions and their sins, that they may thereby make the doctrine of the cross of Christ welcome and desirable. It is painful to the patient, and without doubt unpleasing to the human artist, to probe a deep and dangerous wound; but necessity commands, and without it a complete and lasting cure is not to be expected.

1. The first and most direct way in which the name of God is taken in vain, is by perjury; that is, when he is expressly appealed to in confirmation of what is false, or when engagements are made, as in his name and presence, which are not strictly and literally complied with. I need not take up your time in proving that this is a sin of a deep dye in itself, and attended with peculiar aggravations under the light of the gospel; and I wish it was more difficult to prove the frequency of it in our land, but this likewise is as obvious as the light. I have sometimes met with a random assertion, that though we are wicked enough, we are not worse than other countries. In other things I am content to wave the parallel; but with respect to the sin of perjury, I fear we are much worse than any nation now under the sun, perhaps worse than any that the sun ever saw. I am afraid, there are more and more daring instances of this wickedness amongst us than in all the rest of Europe. By an unhappy kind of necessity, it is interwoven, as it were, with the very constitution of the body politic, and diffuses itself like a deadly contagion amongst all orders and ranks of people. Oaths are so excessively multiplied, and so generally neglected, that it is equally difficult and rare for a person to engage through a course of years in any kind of employment, either civil or commercial, (O that it stopped even here!) without being ensnared. Some are so expressed, that it is morally impossible to comply with them; others so circumstanced, that they are usually swallowed without the remotest design of regarding either in whole or in part. If here and there a few make conscience of their engagements, and are desirous to perform to the Lord their oaths (Matth. v. 33), or decline taking such as open a door either to honour or profit, so strong is the torrent the other way, that it is well if they escape the charge of singularity and preciseness. Though wickedness of every kind too much abounds amongst us, perjury is perhaps peculiarly and eminently our national sin; and I tremble to think it is so, for it gives too just a ground to fear the approach of national judgments. Surely all who have any regard for the honour of God, any sense of the worth of souls, will pray earnestly that this iniquity may not be our ruin, but that the Lord would be pleased to inspire and succeed the most proper means for the removal, or at least the mitigation of this evil. This would be an event worthy to stand in the annals of the happy times and auspicious government under which we live.

2. And though the matter of an oath be strictly true, yet if it is not transacted with a serious acknowledgment and homage of that Divine Being to whom appeal is made, such an oath, however lawful and necessary it may be in itself, is, with regard to all such thoughtless triflers, no better than taking the name of God in vain. It cannot but be grievous to every serious mind, to observe the little reverence and solemnity, or rather the total want of common decency, which too frequently prevails among us in this respect, so that sometimes it is not easy to say whether those who tender the oath, or those who take it, seem least in earnest. Without doubt this indifference may be assigned as one cause of the increase and prevalence of perjury. If those who are authorised to require or receive those solemn appeals, were themselves impressed with a due reverence of the awful majesty of God, and were solicitous to inspire all who came before them with the same sentiments, and would remind them (those especially who appear very positive and unguarded) of the impiety and danger of swearing falsely, it is possible many mischiefs would be prevented. Some persons would probably tremble and start back from the first temptation to this wickedness, and others might be deterred from persisting in it, who, for want of such admonitions and examples, and because they never saw any solemnity observed, precipitately rush upon this enormous evil, and are at length given up to a dreadful habit of wilful and corrupt perjury.

3. If an oath, lawful and necessary in itself,

may thus become criminal through inconsideration, what shall we say of the throng of profane swearers, who wound our ears and pollute our language, by a horrid mixture of execrations and blasphemies in their common conversation? "Their throats are an open sepulchre: their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness: the poison of asps is under their lips," Rom. iii. 13, 14. This I have to say from the word of God, that the Lord will not hold them guiltless. In vain their thoughtless plea, that they mean no harm: in vain their presumptuous comparison of themselves with others, as though these were trivial escapes that did not affect the peace of society. If these were small sins singly, their frequency would swell to a vast amount; but is it indeed a small sin, to rush against the thick bosses of God's buckler, and to despise so terrible a threatening as this? Surely "the plague shall never depart from the house of the swearer." "As he clotheth himself with cursing like as with his garment; so it shall enter into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones," Ps. cix. 17, 18. A habit of swearing is a sure sign not only of an unsanctified heart, but of a conscience hardened, and as it were seared with a hot iron, callous, and quite insensible.

4. Some persons who scruple expressly to mention the name of God, accustom themselves to swear by his creatures, by the heavens, by the light, or by their own souls, &c. But that this likewise is a direct violation of the law, and exposes to the same penalties, we are assured by him who best knew how to explain his own commands. Our Lord determines this point in his sermon on the mount, so as not to leave the possibility of a doubt. "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool.——Neither shalt thou swear by thy head because thou canst not make one hair thereof white or black," Matth. v. 34—36. "And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon," Matth. xxiii. 21, 22. "But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." This decision evidently condemns, not only what is usually deemed swearing, but the whole multitude of idle expletives, whether fashionable or vulgar, which have the force of affirmations in common discourse. Will any who live in a christian country, and have the Bible at hand, think to plead ignorance of these things in the great day?

5. If I should stop here, some of you would applaud yourselves, and perhaps not be displeased with me for what I have hitherto said. Some who think themselves clear thus far, will join with me in saying, "Because of swearing, the land mourns," Jer. xxiii. 10. But are there no other ways of taking the name of God in vain? Yes; many do it as often as they pray; and it is easily proved against numbers who join in our established worship. Let each one consider with what dispositions and desires they have engaged in the service we have already gone through this day. Our mouths have all spoken the same things; but have they been the language of our hearts? In the confession, we acknowledge, that there is no health in us, and speak as if we were true penitents. In the communion-service, we cry for mercy as miserable sinners; we pray that the thoughts of our heart may be cleansed by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name; and for this we appeal to God, as to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. More than a few of you, at certain seasons, publicly declare, that the remembrance of your sins is grievous, and the burden of them is intolerable. Now, what apprehensions can such of you have of God as can dare to use this solemn language when your hearts meant no such thing? Is not this to take his name in vain in the grossest manner? Is it not plain that you think him altogether such a one as yourselves (Psal. l. 21.); nay, more easily imposed upon, and more safely to be trifled with, than a fallible mortal? Strange it is to think, that many can, not only content themselves with this lip-service, but make it the meritorious ground of their hope, and conceit themselves religious because they come so often to church to mock the power that made them! But hardly can any wickedness be imagined more daring, and more dreadfully provoking to the Most High, than such a religion as this. To all such worshippers I may address those striking words of St. Peter to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God," Acts v. 4.

6. The whole lives of those who live in the allowed practice of known sin, under the profession of the christian name, may be considered as one continual breach of this command. In all you say and do, you blaspheme that holy name by which you are called; and still more so if you are declared friends and favourers of evangelical preaching. By your means, "the ways of truth are evil spoken of," 2 Pet. ii. 2. You give occasion to those offences of which it is said, "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh," Matth. xviii. 7. You injure the cause of Christ, stumble the weak in the faith, grieve the hearts of all who love the Lord, and make his enemies rejoice. "Better it would have been for you never to have known the ways of righteousness" (2 Pet. ii. 21.), than thus to abuse your knowledge. You are now mingled with his faithful servants, as the chaff is blended with the wheat upon the floor. But "behold the Judge standeth at

the door," James v. 9. His fan is in his hand, he will throughly purge his floor; and when he gathers the wheat into his garner, you will be consumed like stubble before the flame of his indignation, Matth. iii. 12. What distress and remorse will seize your hearts, when you shall see them with whom you have often joined in the same ordinances, that have lived with you under the same roof, dined at the same table, perhaps slept in the same bed, when you shall see them received into the kingdom, and you yourselves excluded, and thrust into that outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever? Luke xiii. 28.

From this subject we may observe, by way of inference and application,

1. The truth and propriety of that scripture, "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19. What person in this assembly can plead guiltless to every part of this charge? Must we not all stand silent and self-condemned? And if you are a transgressor, what can you do, either to repair the dishonour you have opened to the Divine Majesty, or to prevent the contagious effects of your own evil example? Nothing can be more false, than a too frequent form of speech amongst us; when a man of some amiable qualifications in social life tramples without fear upon the laws of God, how often is it said, by way of extenuation, he is no one's enemy but his own! when indeed his practice declares him to be an enemy of God, an enemy to his holiness and government: and he is a most mischievous enemy to all who live under his influence, and within the circle of his acquaintance, by tempting and encouraging them to sin to the hazard of their souls. Things standing thus with all men by nature, with what language can we answer the law's demands? Must we not adopt the pathetic confession of the prophet? "For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim. The crown is fallen from our heads; woe unto us that we have sinned!" Lam. v. 16.

2. The necessity and value of the gospel; otherwise how can you escape the penalty, and stand acquitted before the supreme Judge? If you refuse this, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, Heb. x. 26. But if you humble yourself, and apply to Jesus, there is yet hope. He died for sinners, the chief of sinners, and the greatest of sins. For his sake, all manner of sin and blasphemy is pardonable: "He is able to save to the uttermost." But he must do the whole, and have all the glory. Believe in his name. This is the first step; without grace derived from him, you can do nothing. Remember his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion; and that he is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, on the behalf of those who are ready to perish. Let this be your plea and encouragement to draw near to a throne of grace. Pray for his Spirit to reveal his righteousness, power, and love to your souls; and as your knowledge of him increases, your repentance will be more spiritual, evangelical, and effectual. Entreat him to enable you to forsake your former evils, to set a guard upon the door of your lips, and to inspire you with an awful veneration of that holy name which you have hitherto profaned. He can teach your polluted lips to shew forth his praise.

And let the redeemed of the Lord, whom he has delivered from the guilt and power of this iniquity, adore the grace and mercy that has saved them. Look back upon your past lives, and rejoice with trembling. How often have you defied his vengeance and power, and perhaps madly uttered horrid imprecations against yourselves? Why have others been cut off in these sins, and you spared? Yes; "such were some of you: but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. And now your tongues, which once uttered blasphemies almost with every breath, or, under a form of godliness, pronounced a language foreign to your hearts, delight in extolling the name of Jesus, and celebrating the wonders of redeeming love. Now, when you speak of the great God, your hearts are awed with an apprehension of his majesty, yet comforted with the thought that this God is your God, your almighty friend, your everlasting portion. Now you feel the influence of the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father." Little did you think in the days of your ignorance, that the God whom you was presumptuously offending, had, in the counsels of his everlasting love, chosen you to salvation by Jesus Christ, Eph. i. 4. But he was found of you when you sought him not, Isa. lxv. 1. He passed by you when you were lying in your blood, and bade you live. Ezek. xvi. 6, 8. This was the secret reason why you could not destroy yourselves. And at length his time of love came, the hour which he had appointed to open your eyes, to shew you mercy, to deliver you from the power of darkness, and to translate you into the kingdom of his dear Son, Col. i. 13. Do not your hearts glow with a sense of your obligations to him who hath loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood? Will you not live to him who has saved you from so great a death? Yea, doubtless you will count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. You will use all your influence to diffuse the savour of his precious name. You will take shame to yourselves, and ascribe glory to him. You will be zealous for his cause, and have a tender

and unerring Judge, will vindicate, approve, and reward you in the great day, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

Thus much concerning the resemblance of the christian life to a race, to which the apostle alludes. I shall briefly take notice of some particulars in which the resemblance fails; and a very interesting and important difference may be observed,

1. In the reward. The "bodily exercise" employed in the games (for to these the apostle refers), "profited little" (1 Tim. iv. 8.): a crown of oak or laurel, or some such bauble, was their highest aim, and this the most of the competitors came short of: for though all ran, one only received the prize. Of little more value, and equal uncertainty, is the prize that has engaged the time and thoughts of many. "But godliness" (the whole course and conflict in which the believer is engaged) "is profitable for all things," or in every view, having promises to support the life that now is, and to crown that which is to come. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son," Rev. xxi. 7. "I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev. ii. 7. "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; yea, I will grant him to sit down with me in my throne," Rev. iii. 12, 21. The Lord will give grace here, and will with-hold no good thing from those who walk uprightly (Psal. lxxxiv. 11.); and hereafter he will crown grace with glory, and place his servants out of the reach of every trouble and enemy, in the kingdom which his love has prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

2. In races, though many run, one only can receive the prize. But thanks be to God, it is not so in the christian race. All who run, as the Lord has appointed, shall be sure to win. No opposition can prevail against them, nor will the number of candidates be any diminution to the happiness of each individual. The inheritance of the saints in light, like the light of the sun, is not diminished by being shared amongst many; each one possesses the whole, in the same perfection as he could do, if there was none to enjoy it but himself.

3. In the races the apostle alludes to, none were compelled to run. The proclamation was general; but those who did not chuse to engage, suffered no disadvantage. But it is not so in the race to which you are invited by the gospel. The Lord is greatly offended with those who slight the message, and refuse to enter the lists. If you only give his ministers a hearing, and return to your farms and merchandise, (Matth. xxii. 5.) forget the worth of your precious souls, and suffer your thoughts to be engrossed with the cares and pleasures of this life, to the neglect of this one thing needful, the Lord will account it a contempt offered to himself, and will ere long call you before his tribunal to answer for it.

4. Those who ran, and did not win the prize, only lost their labour, or at the worst were exposed to shame; but they were liable to no positive punishment. But you who are professors of the gospel, if you come short at last, will be lost for ever. "So run that you may obtain." Be not content with having set out; the promise is made to perseverance. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matth. x. 22.); but if any draw back, or stop short, the Lord will have no pleasure in them, Heb. x. 38. They will not only lose the prize, but will receive a heavy and aggravated doom. It would have been better for them not to have known the ways of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. If you were forced to run for your lives, you would be very thoughtful about the event. But if you are not found amongst those who come in for the prize of eternal life, you will be cast into outer darkness, and sink under the curse of God for ever.

Fain, therefore, would I persuade you to address yourselves with earnestness to run the race set before you. Flee from approaching wrath. The wrath of God is already revealed against all unrighteousness, and soon it will be poured forth upon the head of every transgressor. Though God is patient and forbearing, he is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his glittering sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he hath ordained his arrows against those who shall finally disobey his great command, to receive the gospel of his grace. It is impossible to elude his eye, or to withstand his power. You are upon the brink of danger, if you are not already entered in this race; you stand upon a precipice, and hell from beneath has opened its mouth to receive you. But a respite is still afforded; the Lord waits to be gracious; and as yet there is room. The gate of mercy is not yet shut: "turn therefore to the strong hold, as prisoners of hope;" no longer refuse his gracious invitation, or trifle with your precious souls; seek to Jesus that you may live; apply to him for faith and repentance; and, in his strength and name prepare to run this important race. Meditate upon the glorious prize, which is provided for all who endure to the end; it is freely proposed to all who run. Pardon, grace, and eternal life, are promised and bestowed, without money and without price. If, after so many repeated calls, you still harden your hearts, and stop your ears

and determine that you will not come unto Jesus, that you may have life, you must assuredly perish, without mercy, and without excuse.

But if you are desirous to run, remember the admonition in my text, "So run that you may obtain." Your steps must be regulated by the word of God, or you will wander wide from the good old way; you must derive your sufficiency and strength from Christ by faith and prayer, or you will faint, and be unable to endure to the end. We read of some (Gal. v. 7.) that run well for a season, but were afterwards hindered, and turned aside. Be upon your guard; for there are many that will strive to divert you from your course. Satan, the world, and your own evil hearts, will combine, and form various attempts to slacken your pace, and to withdraw your attention from the one thing needful. Dread the thoughts of stopping short, or turning back; and the more you meet with opposition, be so much the more earnest to redouble your diligence, and especially to cry mightily to him who is able to keep you from falling, to preserve you unblameable in love while here, and at last to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Believers, why are not we as wise in our generation as the children of the world? We see how those who are fond of a common horse-race are thinking and talking of it, and preparing for it every day. Does not their diligence shame us, who are so cold, faint, and dilatory, in the most important, and honourable concerns! Let us gird up the loins of our mind: some of you have not far to run now; you have taken many a weary step since you were first called; but the end is at hand; the period of your complete salvation is now much nearer than when you first believed, Rom. xiii. 11. Think of Jesus, the forerunner and the judge: he has already entered within the vail for us, his eye is upon us, he is near to assist, and waiting to receive us. May his Spirit and his example animate us to press forward to the prize of our high calling, to tread down every difficulty, and to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life!

SERMON XVII.

NO ACCESS TO GOD BUT BY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? MICAH vi. 6, 7, 8.

THERE is no question that can arise in the mind of man, that is of so high importance as this in my text, and yet, alas! how seldom is it laid to heart! May the Spirit of God impress it upon all your consciences! You are now come before God to worship; ask yourselves, wherewith? On what do you ground your hope, that you offer him acceptable service? You must shortly appear before him in judgment. Are you prepared to meet him? Amos, iv. 12. What plea have you provided? Take heed in time. Be sure that it is such a one as he will admit, lest your hopes should fail, and you perish in his presence as chaff before the devouring flame.

The passage plainly expresses the inquiry of an awakened mind. It is to be feared many of you have often read these words without being suitably affected with their meaning. But if you can indeed make them your own, if you are truly solicitous how you are to come before God both here and hereafter, I hope his good Spirit will enable you to receive satisfaction from the answer given by the prophet.

If you can speak these words from your heart, you will readily acknowledge that they imply the following things:

1. A sense of duty; that you are under an obligation to come and bow before the High God. You are sensible that you ought not, and you find that you cannot, live without paying him homage and worship, but that he has a right to your service, and expects it. Too many shew, in this respect, that they are dead while they live, dead to God, insensible and regardless of their many obligations to him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being. They live without prayer; they offer no praises to the God of their lives, but rise up and lie down, go out and come in, without one reflection on his power, goodness, and providence, even like the beasts that perish. But the awakened soul cannot do so. He trembles to think that he once could ne-

glect that God, whom all the hosts of heaven worship, and is convinced, that however fair his character might have been amongst men, he justly deserved to have been struck to hell for so long restraining prayer before God.

2. A sense of the majesty and glory of God. Whoever seriously asks this question, has an awful view of the Lord as the High God. Many, who do not wholly neglect prayer and worship, yet have no spiritual and humbling apprehensions of the God whom they profess to serve. Their prayers, whether in public or private, are only lip-service, as though they thought him altogether such a one as themselves. Their petitions are not guided by their desires, but they utter with their mouths what they find in the book, though their hearts have no love or relish of the things they ask for. How often is God mocked by those who join in our established worship? Has he not been so this morning by some of you? How little he is reverenced by many, is plain from the little regard they pay to his commands. They will break his Sabbaths, blaspheme his name, live in drunkenness, whoredom, anger, and malice, and yet pretend to worship him. But those who rightly understand the inquiry in my text, cannot do thus. They consider him as the High God: they know that he humbles himself to behold even the worship of heaven, and are therefore struck with this thought, Wherewith can I, a poor worm, who am but dust and ashes, come before this High God?

3. A sense of guilt. Alas! says the soul that is enlightened to see itself, I am not only mean, but vile. "I have sinned, but what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?" Job vii. 20. Wherewith shall such a polluted, obnoxious creature as I am appear before a holy God? Can my services atone for my sins, or what service can I perform that is not defiled and rendered unworthy of acceptance by the evil of my heart? But could I perform ever so well from this day forward, what would this avail for what is past? If I had offended a man like myself, I might think of making some amends; but my sins are against God. His justice, wisdom, holiness, and truth, have all demands upon me. What then can I bring? Will sacrifices appease him? No; these, though of his own appointment, are not of themselves sufficient. "It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins," Heb. x. 4. Though all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills were mine, though I should offer all Lebanon, hills of frankincense, rivers, yea, ten thousand rivers of oil, all would not do. Or should I give my son, my only son, the fruit of my body, neither would this atone for the sin of my soul.

Here, then, you may see, that to an awakened sinner sin is the heaviest burden imaginable. He is willing, and would be glad (if it might be), to purchase the pardon of sin with the loss of every thing he accounts most valuable. If he had the whole world, he would freely part with it to be free from guilt. But at the same time he finds it a burden that he cannot shake off; he knows that he never can be delivered for any thing he can do or propose, and therefore the great subject of inquiry always upon his mind is, Wherewith, or how shall I appear and stand before the High God?

I hope some of you are thus minded; to you I have a comfortable message from the other part of my text. But as I cannot hope thus of you all, I must previously take notice, that there is hardly any one passage in the Bible more generally misunderstood, and which ignorant and careless men are more prone to wrest to their own destruction, than the verses under our present consideration. Not a few, having their eyes blinded by the god of this world, and their hearts enslaved to the love and practice of sin, are content to understand it as if it was rather a rebuke than an encouragement to them, who, like the jailor (Acts xvi. 30.), are deeply affected with a concern for the salvation of their souls. Their comment is to this purpose, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good:" that is, you need not terrify yourself at this rate; there is nothing so evil in sin, or so awful in God's threatenings as you suppose. He has said, indeed, "the soul that sinneth shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4.); yet here you see an easy way to escape, "Do justly," which is, being interpreted, Do not grossly cheat and injure your neighbour; abstain from robbery, extortion, and heavy oppression: and "love mercy;" that is, Be ready to do what are commonly called good-natured offices, and to give a shilling or a guinea (according to your circumstances) now and then to the poor, and you will be safe enough. How they explain the other clause, "walk humbly," upon this plan, I confess myself unable to conceive, and therefore I believe they are glad to omit it; for I am sure light cannot be more contrary to darkness, than such language as this is opposite to the idea of walking humbly with God.

According to this opinion, "to do justly, and to love mercy," are the whole of religion. They are indeed essential parts of it; and miserable will you be who talk in this strain, if God, at the great day, should judge you by this text to which you now so presumptuously appeal. How wonderful is the pride and arrogance of fallen man, who will dare to urge a plea before God, which must issue in his own confusion! Do you indeed deal justly? It implies something more than not being an arrant knave. Do you at all times, and in all respects, behave to every person as you would they should do unto you? Did you never take the least advantage of the ignorance or neces-

sity of your neighbour? Did you never speak or report any thing to his prejudice, without sufficient warrant and sufficient cause? You feel how tender you are of your own character and interests. Have you been equally tender of the interests of others, of all others with whom you have had connections, without being influenced in any instance or degree by partiality or mercenary views? If you cannot appeal to the Searcher of hearts that you have walked in this integrity, your pretence that you have done justly is vile hypocrisy, and you may tremble to think how easily you may be condemned out of your own mouth. Alas! if God, to whom all your thoughts and actions have been incessantly exposed, should enter into judgment with you, how unable would you be to answer him in one of a thousand!

Again, do you love mercy? Do you love it as a miser loves money? Is it the pleasure of your hearts to overcome evil with good? If your brother or neighbour offend you, not seven times but seventy times seven (Matth. xviii. 22.), do you find it delightful to repeat your forgiveness, to bless them that curse you, to pray for them that despitefully use you, and to requite repeated injuries with repeated acts of kindness? If not, what have you to do with mercy, either to pretend that you love mercy yourself, or to indulge a hope of obtaining mercy from God, if you know no better way of seeking it than by your own works. But suppose you were less culpable in these particulars, can you say that you walk humbly with God? Alas! how impossible is this, while you trust in your own righteousness, while you slight and despise his threatenings, while your hearts rise against his gospel! Are you not impatient under the afflictions which he sends, and unthankful for innumerable mercies which he is daily bestowing upon you? And is this to walk humbly with God? Bear with me for a plain word, which I purposely speak plainly that it may not be forgot; I say, that if any man or woman can be saved in this way, that is, upon the account of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, then Satan himself has no cause to despair.

I return now to those who see and acknowledge themselves to be sinners, without righteousness and strength, and are desirous to appear before God with comfort. To you I bring good tidings; the Lord help you to believe and rejoice! He hath shewed you that which is good, which is the only and sufficient ground whereon to build your hopes; he has shewed or revealed it, for otherwise you could never have found it out. What the law cannot do, in that it is weak and ineffectual through the flesh, God has done by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3. The Lord Jesus Christ is that good to which the prophet refers: Moses and the prophets, and all the scriptures, testify of him, and Micah among the rest. One of the most illustrious testimonies to the person and office of our Emmanuel in the Old Testament, is to be found in the chapter preceding my text. "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace," Micah v. 2—5. All other sacrifices and saviours are insufficient; but Jesus, by the once offering up of himself hath made a full, perfect, and everlasting atonement, and now he reigns in our nature, possessed of all the fulness of grace, exercising the power of God in the salvation of men. Would you then come before the High God? come in the name of Jesus, and you shall find acceptance. In him God is well pleased (Matth. iii. 17.); and for his sake he is well pleased with all who honour his beloved Son, and put their trust in him. He has authority and compassion sufficient to save the most deplorable and the most unworthy. If you read the history of his life and death, you will read of a display of love and grace beyond expression; and he is the same still. Before he ascended, he left an assurance for your encouragement, that whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast him out. If you say, I want faith, remember it is his gift, and he has promised to do whatever you ask in his name. Therefore fight against unbelief, resist Satan with the sword of the Spirit. If it is suggested that you are a great sinner, you cannot deny it, nor need you; avow the charge, take shame to yourselves, and give glory to God; but it is equally true, that Jesus is a great Saviour, he is able to save to the uttermost; and though your iniquities are great, yet cast not away your hope, for his mercy is greater than the heavens.

When you come in this way, what does the Lord require of you? Is it to make your own peace? He would as soon require you to make a new heaven and a new earth. Is it to keep your own soul? No more than he requires you to keep the sun in its course. His own arm has wrought salvation, and he will secure it. He requires none of your help here; nay, he disdains the thought: you might as well offer to help him to govern the world. But this he requires of you, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God;" and the methods of his grace will enable you to do so.

1. "To do justly." We are by nature attached to worldly goods, and wholly influenced by selfish principles. But faith in Jesus com-

municates new motives, views, and aims to the soul: it teaches us to have our treasure in heaven; to sit loose to the world; to be satisfied with that station and competence which Divine Providence has allotted us; and to love our neighbours as ourselves, because they are our fellow-sinners, and are capable of being called to a participation with us in the honourable relation and privilege of the children of God. Upon these principles the practice of justice is attainable, but upon no other; for though there are many characters honourable and blameless in the outward concerns of life, and in the judgment of men, there is no person upon earth who does or can love or practise justice in its full extent, till he has received the Spirit of Christ, and lives upon him by faith, for wisdom and strengh from day to day.

2. "To love mercy." None can truly love it but those who have tasted it. When your hearts feel the comforts of God's pardoning love, you will delight to imitate him. When you can truly rejoice that he has freely forgiven you that immense debt, which is expressed by ten thousand talents (Matth. xviii. 24), you will have no desire to take your fellow-servant by the throat for a few pence. This sense of God's goodness, and the continual need you find of his renewed mercy from day to day, will soften your spirit (if you are a believer), disarm and gradually weaken every proud thought that would plead for the exercise of anger and resentment towards those who have offended you. You will be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; you will put on (as the beloved of God) bowels of meekness (Col. iii. 12), long-suffering and compassion, forbearing and forgiving, if you have ought against any; because God, for Christ's sake, has freely forgiven you. If you find this practice difficult, it is owing partly to the remaining depravity of your nature, and partly because you have had but a faint sense of his mercy. Pray for a more powerful manifestation of it, and you will do better; mercy will be your delight.

3. "To walk humbly." "Can two walk together except they are agreed?" Amos iii. 3. When Christ is your peace, you will delight in God; you will set him before you, commune with him, study to please him, and to keep all his commandments. This is to walk with God; and you will walk humbly, remembering how much you owe to free grace, and how far you fall short in your best endeavours. These considerations, impressed by the Holy Spirit, will humble you, will keep you from being high in your own esteem, wise in your own conceit, and from seeking great things for yourself. You will be habitually thankful when the Lord gives, content when he with-holds, patient when he afflicts. You will confess yourself unworthy of the smallest mercies you possess, and acknowledge in your heaviest trials, that he has laid far less upon you than your iniquities have deserved.

This is the pattern we are to copy after, and this is the certain tendency and effect of his grace. A measure of this disposition is found in all who are christians indeed. Yet we may take shame to ourselves that we are still so far defective in every branch of our duty. Let us stir up ourselves to greater diligence, watchfulness, and prayer, that we may obtain more lively, abiding, and transforming views of that which is our true good, that so we may be enabled to glorify our heavenly Father, and to adorn our profession, by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

SERMON XVIII.

OF A LIVING AND A DEAD FAITH.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

JAMES ii. 26

WHOEVER has read the scriptures with attention, must have observed several passages, which, at first view, and till throughly examined and compared, appear hard to reconcile to each other. No instance of this sort is more remarkable than the seeming difference of judgment between St. Paul and St. James on the point of justification. St. Paul having said, "That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. iii. 28), produces the example of Abraham to confirm his assertion. St. James (in the chapter before us), from the example of the same Abraham, draws a conclusion which seems directly to contradict this: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," James ii. 24. Can any two opinions be more opposite in appearance? How then can both be true, or how can we believe both writers infallible in their doctrine, and influenced by the unerring Spirit of God? Must we cleave to the one, and reject the other? and if so, how shall we know which is the real truth?

We may confidently answer, The apostles are both right: their doctrine is equally from God, and does not clash in any particular. The darkness and difficulty is in the apprehensions of men, and not in the word of God. Yet a difficulty there is, and I hope I shall not detain you unprofitably at this time, by endeavouring to clear it, and afterwards to press upon you the words of my text as a proper inference from the whole.

When men who are strangers to christian experience, and who trust more to their own sagacity and learning than to the word and Spirit of God, attempt to resolve cases of this sort, they make strange work. And it is no

wonder; for how can any one explain what he does not understand? It would tire you if I should relate a tenth part of the conjectures of learned men upon this very subject. I shall mention one or two as a specimen. A writer of some eminence in the world confesses the difficulty I have noticed in its full strength. He allows and affirms that it is not only hard, but impossible, to reconcile the apostles to each other, and concludes that, since it is impossible to hold both their sentiments, we must abide by him who wrote the last. This, from many arguments his learning furnished him with, he thinks to have been St. James. Accordingly, he gives up the other, and his doctrine of faith without works, to shift for themselves. He supposes that St. Paul, in the heat of his argument, carried the matter a little too far, and that St. James wrote afterwards to correct him.

But to shew you (excuse a familiar expression) how doctors differ, and at the same time to warn even true believers against hastily judging beyond the line of their experience, I would observe, that that great servant of God, Luther, soon after he began to preach the gospel, made a mistake no less bold and presuming on the other side of the question. He had felt the power of St. Paul's doctrine in his own soul, and would have defied an angel that would have dared to oppose it; therefore, when his adversaries pressed him with the authority of St. James, not having at that time light to give a more solid answer, he ventured to deny the authenticity of the whole epistle, and rashly insisted, both in his sermons and books, that St. James never wrote it. But Luther, though mistaken in this point, was under the Lord's teaching; he went on from strength to strength, increasing in knowledge and grace; and when his judgment was better informed, he publicly retracted his former unguarded assertion.

Leaving, therefore, the authority of men, let us betake ourselves to the word of God, and humbly seek the light of his Spirit, who is promised to guide his people in their sincere inquiries after truth.

Now, if you consider the scope and design of our apostles, and take in the context, I hope this seeming opposition will be soon removed. St. Paul is evidently treating on the great point of a sinner's justification in the sight of God; he shews that it cannot be of the law, because by the law all men were already condemned, and because then boasting could not be excluded, but that it was freely by grace, through the redemption that is by Christ Jesus. His reasoning will appear to greater advantage by perusing the whole passage, than by producing a few detached sentences. After he had summed up the evidence with respect both to Jews and Gentiles, and pronounced his verdict, that every mouth must be stopped, and that the whole world stood guilty before God, he proceeds thus: "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 20—28. And because the Jews had a high opinion of Abraham, he proceeds in the next chapter to shew that Abraham was justified in the same way. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3—5. The circumstance in Abraham's life referred to is, when he believed the promise of God, that though he was then childless, he should be the father of many nations (Gen. xii. 3.; xvii. 4.), and that particularly from him should proceed the Messiah, the promised seed, in whom both he himself, and all the families of the earth should be blessed.

St. James expresly treats of those who rested in a notion which they called faith, and accounted sufficient for their salvation, though it had no influence upon their hearts, tempers, and conduct. He shews that their hope is vain, because such a faith as this the devils have. And he proves, by the example of Abraham, that his faith was very different from theirs, because it enabled him to perform the hardest and most painful act of obedience the offering up of his only son. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can (this) * faith save him? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed, and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I

* ἡ πιστις, *this* faith.

will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man! that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled (confirmed), which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only, James ii. 14—24. It is exceedingly plain that he had not the same thing in view which St. Paul had; for the incident to which he here refers, happened a great many years after Abraham had been declared justified in the sight of God.

The sum is, the one declares that nothing renders us acceptable to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, that such a faith, when true and genuine, is not solitary, but accompanied with every good work. The one speaks of the justification of our persons; this is by faith only: the other, of the justification of our profession; and this is by faith also, but not alone, for it works by love, and produces obedience.

St. James has the same view in speaking of Rahab (James ii. 25.); and by producing her as a confirmation, it is still more evident, that he is only considering works as the proofs of our sincerity. We have no sure ground to conclude, that Rahab, in the act of receiving the spies, and at that time, had any saving faith, or any view to the Messiah and the covenant of grace; though it is most probable she had, after she was joined to the people of Israel, and became acquainted with divine revelation. But in Jericho her thoughts seem to have been confined to a temporal deliverance; and the profession of faith which she made to the spies implies no more. "And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red-sea for you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites.—And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt; neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that you will also shew kindness unto my father's house; and give me a true token," Joshua ii. 9—12. Had she said thus, and yet delivered the spies up to the king of Jericho, it would have proved, that she did not speak from her heart; but her profession was justified by receiving them into her house, concealing them from the search made after them, and sending them away in peace. Surely this conduct of Rahab will be sufficient to condemn many who would be thought christians.

We may, therefore, deduce two propositions, perfectly consistent with each other, from the passage in question.

1. That there is no acceptance for any of the sons of Adam with the just and holy God, but through Jesus Christ as our righteousness received by faith; and that in this concern works of every kind are absolutely excluded.

This is the capital doctrine of the gospel; it is not only clearly asserted in innumerable passages both of the Old Testament and the New, but is St. Paul's express subject and design in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. Though he was yielding and compliant in many things of less importance, and was willing to become all things to all men, yet he would not give place, no not for an hour, to any who offered to invalidate this foundation-truth. He declares, that to mix any thing, to contend for any qualification or observance, as of necessary influence, to concur with the perfect work of Christ in the justification of a sinner, is to darken, alter, and destroy the gospel which he preached; and denounces an anathema against every one who should be guilty of this presumption, yea, though he should be (if such a thing were possible) an angel from heaven, Gal. i. 8. 9. How cordially he rested his own hope upon the truth which he proposed to others, he declares elsewhere: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of * the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9.

If this is the scriptural doctrine, let each of you examine on what ground you stand. Has God appointed one way of salvation? and will any of you dare to propose another? This would be both wicked and dangerous: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. You may please yourselves now with what you account your good works; but when God shall "lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet" (Isa. xxviii. 17.), none will be able to abide his appearance, but those who can plead a righteousness perfectly answerable to the law's demands, which can only be found in Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

And as this doctrine is of so great and es-

* Ἐκ νόμου, of law; that is, of *any law* whatsoever, not of *the* law, as if he only meant the Jewish law. The article τοῦ seems here to be purposely left out

sential importance, beware how you listen to any other. Take heed how you hear (Mark iv. 24.; Luke viii. 18.); be not influenced by the names, characters, or stations of men, when the salvation of your souls is at stake. Prize the liberty, which as protestants and Britons you enjoy, of bringing every doctrine to the trial of God's word, and freely use it. I account it my honour and happiness that I preach to a free people, who have the Bible in their hands. To your Bibles I appeal. I entreat, I charge you to receive nothing upon my word, any farther than I prove it from the word of God; and bring every preacher, and every sermon that you hear to the same standard. If this is the truth, you had need to be well established in it; for it is not the current and fashionable doctrine of the times. Let me then farther recommend to you (it is a direction our Lord has given), to examine doctrines by their effects: "By their fruits ye shall know them," Matth. vii. 16. The truths of God, when faithfully preached, in humble dependence upon his blessing, will be attested by his power. At such times, and in such places, a visible change will soon be observable in some one or other of the hearers; they cease to do evil, they learn to do well; they acknowledge God in all their ways, and glorify him before men, by living according to his precepts. And if you ask them the reason of this change, they will freely ascribe it to the blessing of God upon that sort of preaching, which by too many is accounted foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 21.

On the other hand, we are not afraid to challenge those who are most acquainted with men and books, to produce instances of the same effects wrought by any other doctrine than that which commends the Lord Christ in his person, offices, and power, as the only object of a sinner's hope. How much is said and wrote to tell people what they should be, and what they should do! yet where these principles are not enforced, there is nothing effectually done, nothing indeed attempted, beyond a formal round of dull and heartless service; a little something that looks like religion, on the Lord's day to appear in church at the summons of the bell, to repeat words because other people do the same, to hear what is delivered from the pulpit with little attention or affection, unless something occurs that is suited to exalt self, or to soothe conscience, and then to run with eagerness into the world again.

Or if here and there a person is truly touched by the secret influence and guidance of the Spirit of God, where this evangelical doctrine is not publicly maintained, the consequence always is, that they renounce the things which they before held for truths, are brought into that way of thinking which is agreeable to St. Paul's doctrine, and receive it gladly whenever it comes in their way

It must be allowed, however, at the same time, that there are counterfeit professors, whose religion lies in notions, and who, while they profess to believe in God, in works deny him; by reason of whom the ways of truth are evil spoken of, 2 Pet. ii. 2. This the apostles have taught us to expect; nay, it was so from the beginning, even while the apostles were themselves personally with the churches. To such St. James addresses the passage I have been reading to you, of which my text is the conclusion; and as I dare not hope that there are none such in this great assembly, it is highly proper that, before I conclude, I should take notice of a second proposition which naturally offers from the subject we have had in hand; and more especially from the reasoning of St. James, and from the words of my text.

2. That true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has a prevailing and habitual influence upon the hearts and lives of those who possess it; and that they are vain men, and deceivers of themselves, who pretend to faith in him, while their lives and conversations shew them to be enslaved to the love of the world, and the dominion of sin. The apostle, to inspire us with a just abhorrence of this false profession, makes use of two comparisons, which are exceedingly striking. May God open the eyes of those who are concerned in it, to perceive and tremble at the justness and horror of the resemblance!

1st, He compares it to the faith of devils. "Thou believest there is one God; thou dost well. The devils also believe, and tremble," James, ii. 10. Are there any here whom it is needful to address in this harsh manner? My dear brethren, bear with me; I wish you well, and would willingly rejoice in every good appearance; but, alas! how little does it signify what you believe, or what you say, unless your acknowledged principles have an effect upon your conduct!

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? so does Satan. Do you believe the election of God, the sovereignty of grace, the perseverance of the saints? it is possible the devil may have a more extensive knowledge in these doctrines than the wisest of men; yet this benefits him not; it is not want of knowledge, but want of love, that makes him what he is.

The only effect mentioned of the faith of devils is, that it increases their terror and aggravates their guilt. They believe (there are no sceptics in hell), and tremble. Is not this too much the case of some of you? If you knew less, you would be easier at least, and less inexcusable; and yet perhaps you mistake your state, and think yourselves, on this account, far less blameable than you really are. Perhaps sometimes, when you reflect sincerely on your ways, and how strangely you are hurried to act contrary to the convic

tions which the preaching of the gospel forces upon you, you are ready to charge the Lord and his dispensations hardly, and to say, O that he would give me his grace! but if not, what can I do without it? Let conscience now speak faithfully, and it will tell you, that if you are condemned, it will not be for what you cannot do, but for wilfully refusing to improve the power already given you. When I tell you, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord with comfort, and that you must break off from your vain company and evil practices, if you expect or desire to be saved, you know that I speak the truth; and your looks often testify that you feel the force of it. Now, while the word of God is sounding in your ears, you perhaps are thinking, "It is time, high time indeed, to break off; though the Lord has forborne me long, he will surely strike at last, if I go on thus." And yet, alas! what I have formerly seen gives me much cause to fear, that to-morrow, or the next time they entice you, you will consent again. But could I tell you, that by going a different way, you might gain a sum of money, or could I make it appear, that the next time you went to such a place, your house would certainly be robbed, I make no doubt but you would forbear. And yet gold is not grace. It is then plain that you have power, but your will is in fault. God has enlightened your conscience; but you rebel against it. O repent! while there is yet space afforded. Call upon the name of Jesus: who knows but he may even yet deliver you.

2dly, He compares it to a dead carcase, which is not only unprofitable, but loathsome and offensive. May God shew you to-day, how odious your profession is in his sight! for by assenting to the truths of the gospel, and outwardly favouring the cause, and the instruments which the Lord has raised up to promote it, you are so far professors. May he enable you to be, not only almost, but altogether christians! For while you thus halt between two opinions, and stand divided between God and the world, you are an abomination to God, a grief to his people, a stumbling block to the ignorant, and are (if this was of any weight in comparison of what I have already said) secretly despised by those who pretend to court your acquaintance. Your guilt is in some respects more aggravated, and your example unspeakably more mischievous, than either would be if you openly rejected the truth. You stand in the rank of those wicked servants who know their master's will, but do it not. The great Judge has determined concerning these, that they shall be beaten with many stripes, Luke, xii. 48. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; look up to Jesus, who is exalted to bestow both faith and repentance, that you may no longer be torn in pieces by those inward contentions, but experience that peace which passes all understanding, Phil. iv. 7

SERMON XIX.

GUILT REMOVED, AND PEACE RESTORED.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. PSALM li. 15.

THE history of David is full of instruction Every thing recorded of him affords us either consolation or caution. In his example we see much of the sovereign power and providence of God. When a youth, though the least of his father's house, he was singled out, and called from following sheep, to rule a kingdom. We see him supported through a variety of difficulties, and at length established in his throne, to the amazement and confusion of his enemies. In him likewise we have a striking proof of the evil that is in the heart of man. Who would have thought it, that David, the man so highly favoured, so wonderfully preserved, the man after God's own heart, who, in the time of his distress, could say, "My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God" (Psalm xlii. 2.), that he should be, in an unguarded hour, seduced, surprised, and led captive of the devil! From gazing he proceeds to adultery, from adultery to murder, and at length sinks into such a stupid frame of mind, that an express message from God was needful to convince him of his sin. And in this circumstance we farther see the riches of divine grace and mercy, how tenderly the Lord watches over his sheep, how carefully he brings them back when wandering from him, and with what rich goodness he heals their backslidings, and loves them freely. David was fallen, but not lost. "The thing which he had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. xi. 27), yet his loving-kindness and faithfulness were unalterable. He was interested in that covenant, "which is well ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.); and therefore, when he confessed his sin, the Lord assured him, by his servant Nathan, that "he had put away his sin, and he should not die for it," 2 Sam. xii. 13.

However, though the Lord is thus gracious in passing by the iniquity of his children, yet he will let them know, by sorrowful experience, that "it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against him," Jer. ii. 19. Though he will not cast off, he will chasten; he will withdraw his presence, and suspend his gracious influences; and this to a sensible heart is a heavy punishment. Though David was delivered from the fear of death and hell, he penned this psalm in the bitterness of his soul. He did not consider the Lord as his enemy, but as a friend and a father, whom he had

greatly offended. He longed to be reconciled; but could not as yet recover his former confidence. He hoped, indeed, that a time of refreshment would come from his presence; and therefore he continued waiting; but for the present he made heavy complaints, that his bones were broken, and his mouth stopped. He had lost his strength and life, and found he could not restore himself. He was struck dumb by his late fall; and therefore he breathes out this prayer, "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

From these words I propose to consider that mournful case, which too often happens in the christian life, when the believer's mouth is stopped, and his lips closed, so that he cannot shew forth the praises of his God. And in this view,

1. I shall point out to you the persons who have reason to make this complaint.

2. Explain what is implied in their lips being thus shut up.

3. Shew you by what means the Lord opens the closed lips. And,

4. I shall observe, that when a person's lips are thus opened, his mouth, and all that is within him, will certainly shew forth the Lord's praise. May the Holy Spirit apply the word, and command a blessing upon the whole!

I. This petition especially suits two sorts of persons:

1. The *backsliding* believer; one who has formerly known the goodness of God; has rested in his love, and rejoiced in his salvation; "has tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. ii. 3), and walked with comfort in the way of his commandment; but at length, by an unguarded conduct, or by building wood, hay, and stubble upon the Lord's foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11—13), has grieved the good Spirit of God, and he is withdrawn. The Comforter and instructor of his soul is far from him, and therefore he sits in darkness and silence, Lam. i. 16. He only retains a sense of his loss, and can do no more than sigh out this prayer: "O Lord, open thou my lips."

2. The *doubting* believer; the unbelieving believer (if I may be allowed the expression):—I mean one who has been deeply convinced of sin, and taught by the Spirit of God that there is no salvation but in the Lord Jesus Christ; one who loves the word, and ways, and people of God, who is careful to the utmost of his power to abstain from the evil that is in the world, and esteems "the loving-kindness of the Lord to be better than life" (Psal. lxiii. 3); one at whom the enemy has often thrust sore that he might fall (Psal. cxviii. 13), but the Lord has secretly upheld him through many a bitter hour, and he finds he is not cut off yet, though he perhaps expects it every day. Such as these have indeed sufficient ground to say, "If the Lord was not on my side, I had been swallowed up long ago," Psal. cxxiv. 3. They have reason to conclude with David, "By this, if by nothing else, I know that thou favourest me, seeing my enemies, who have assaulted me so continually, have not yet prevailed against me," Psal. xli. 11. But yet, through a sense of past guilt, a sight of present corruptions, the prevalence of unbelief, the workings of a legal spirit, the want of a clear apprehension of the Lord's way of justifying the ungodly, and from the force of Satan's temptations, who is exceeding busy to press all these things upon the heart, their mouths are stopped likewise. They cannot believe, and therefore they cannot speak. However, there are seasons and intervals when they obtain a little glimpse of hope, and then the whole desire of their souls is expressed in the words of my text, "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

II. I proceed to consider what may be included in this case, what it is to have the mouth stopped. The persons I have mentioned have the same liberty of speech in common affairs as others; but because they cannot converse freely with him, who, notwithstanding all their doubts and fears, and follies, still maintains a secret hold of their souls they account themselves no better than dumb. They cannot *speak to* the Lord, nor *of* him, nor *for* him, as they wish and ought to do. These are the three heads of their complaint, and therefore they sigh and say, "O Lord open thou my lips!"

1. Alas! says the believer that has sinned, and lost his strength, "O that it was with me as in times past!" Job xxix. 2. I well remember when I had freedom of access, and found it good to draw near to my God, when I could pour out all my complaints and cares before him, and leave them with him. I remember the time when my heart was overwhelmed within me, and my spirit was burdened, Psal. cxlii. 3. I saw myself a wretched, helpless sinner. Innumerable evils took hold of me. I thought I was marked out for destruction. I found Satan at my right hand, waiting for a permission to seize my soul, and make me his prey for ever, Zech. iii. 1. I looked around, but saw no way to escape, and gave up all for lost. But, O! I remember, when none in heaven or earth could help me, how the Lord drew "near to me in the day of my distress, and said unto my soul, Fear not, I am thy salvation," Lam. iii. 57. He revealed himself as an almighty, suitable Saviour. He said, "Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. "He brought me out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," Psal. xl. 2. "He brought me into his banquoting-house, and his banner over me was love. I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste."

Cant. ii. 3, 4. This was the beginning, but it was not all; many a gracious visit he favoured me with afterwards. O the sweet hours of secret prayer! O the happy communion in which I walked with him all the day long! "Then in the multitude of thoughts within me, his comforts refreshed my soul," Psal. xciv. 19. Then I could smile at Satan's rage, and face a frowning world. Every blessing of common providence was doubly welcome, for I could read his name of love written upon it; and every affliction brought resignation and peace, because I saw my Father's hand in it, and found at a throne of grace renewed strength always suited to my need. Happy were those times; but, alas! they are gone. I could hardly then persuade myself that I should be moved any more. I little thought there was such desperate wickedness in my heart, that, after so much experience of his goodness, I should foolishly wander from him again. But, O! what a change have I lived to see! I have grieved that good Spirit of God by which I was sealed, and now I find myself in the hands of my enemies. The Lord hides himself and stands afar off, and I have lost the power of prayer. Those precious promises which once were the joy of my soul, which I could boldly plead at the throne of grace, and say All these are mine, have no longer any power or sweetness; I read them, but I cannot feel them, and my trials and sins, which once I could cast upon my Saviour, and find instant relief, are now a heavy burden, too great for me to bear. Mercies have lost their relish, and afflictions have lost their usefulness, since neither the one nor the other are of force to stir up my soul to prayer. "O Lord, open thou my lips."

I remember likewise, when I had this freedom in speaking with God, how pleasing it was to me to speak of him. My heart was full, and running over with a sense of his goodness, so that it was my meat and drink to say, "Come unto me, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul," Psal. lxvi. 16. Then the company of his people was delightful indeed. The meanest of his children that would sit and hear me speak of his loving-kindness, was precious to me: I esteemed them the excellent of the earth in whom was all my delight, Psal. xvi. 3. and lv. 14. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company. And I thank God I love them still; but I can neither help them, nor be helped by them, as in times past. In vain they say unto me, Come, sing us one of the songs of Zion. Alas! how can I sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land? My harp is hung upon the willows, my tongue cleaveth to the roof of my mouth, Psal. cxxxvii. 3—5. I dwell in darkness and silence, as those who have been long dead. "O Lord, open thou my lips."

And when I could thus speak to God, and of him, I had likewise liberty to speak for him. I was then very jealous for the Lord of hosts, 1 Kings xix. 10. It wounded my soul to hear his name profaned, to see his commandments broken, and his gospel slighted. I had a tender concern for poor sinners; I could not but wish, that, if possible, every person I met might know what I knew, and feel what I felt. And especially where I had friendship and influence, I was ready to improve it to the best purpose. The love of Christ constrained me to lay myself out for his service, 2 Cor. v. 14. I could not but oppose sin and self-righteousness, and plead the cause of my Saviour upon every occasion. I was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for I felt it to be the power of God unto salvation in my own soul (Rom. i. 16.), and durst recommend it to every one, as the only balm for sin and sorrow. But now the crown is fallen from my head: woe unto me that I have sinned, Lam. v. 16. I am shut out from the fountain, and all my streams are dried up. My comforts and my usefulness are declined together. "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

Such is the complaint of the backslider in heart, when he is filled with his own ways. And,

2. This, with a little variation, will suit the doubting tempted soul too. These will confess, that the experience I have described is the desire of their hearts. Such communication with God, such a freedom in his ways, such a zeal for his service, is the very thing they mean, when they entreat the Lord to open their lips. And indeed they cannot, they dare not deny, but they have at times had some little tastes of them, otherwise they would not know what I mean. For these things are to the natural man the merest folly imaginable; he understands them not, therefore he despises them; nay, he hates them with a perfect hatred, and opposes them with all his heart. But still they complain under a present burden. One dark hour of temptation blots out all the traces of comfort they have known, and they refuse consolation. They will insist on it, I have neither part nor lot in the matter; I cannot get near him, and I fear I never shall. When I attempt to pray, a sense of my sins and sinfulness stops my mouth. I see the Lord, not upon the golden mercy-seat, but upon the fiery throne of justice, and I am ready to call upon the rocks and mountains to hide me from his presence. When I would commune with his people, I am silenced by that dreadful word, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant into thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16. When I would bear

my feeble testimony for him in the world, conscience alarms me, and says, "Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?" Rom. ii. 21. And then "the enemy comes in like a flood" (Isaiah lix. 19.), with "God has forsaken him; persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him," Psal. lxxi. 11. Thus I "spend my days in groaning and water my couch with tears," Psal. vi. 6.

This is a heavy case indeed; and would be insupportable, but that the faithful Shepherd, in a secret unseen way, affords timely succour, and sets bounds to the raging enemy, beyond which he cannot pass. "Hitherto shalt thou come" (Job xxxviii. 11.); thus far thou art permitted to vex, and wound, and tear, "but no farther." The Lord knows our frame, and has promised with every temptation to provide either strength to endure, or a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13. Two things are proper to be mentioned for the encouragement of such souls to wait on, and expect deliverance.

The first is, The examples of the saints. Think not your lot strange, as though some new and unheard-of thing had befallen you. Thousands, and ten thousands, now in glory, have tasted, yea drank deeply of this cup before you. And many yet upon earth, who are now rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, have said in times past, as you say now, "I shall one day perish by the hand of these enemies (1 Sam. xxvii. 1.); the Lord hath cast me quite off, and I shall never live to see his goodness in the land of the living," Psal. lxxiv. 1. Or if you choose scripture proofs, you need only read the book of Job, the Psalms, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, to be convinced that some whom you number amongst the Lord's most eminent and highly-favoured servants have been reduced to use such expressions as suit your case, no less than if they had been wrote for you alone. Do not they say, "That they were broken with breach upon breach (Job xvi. 14.); that the arrows of God stuck fast in them (Psal. xxxviii. 2.); that the Lord wrote bitter things against them, and counted them his enemies (Job xiii. 26. and xxxii. 10.); that he had shut them up within stone walls, and covered himself with a cloud, that their prayers might not pass through?" Lam. iii. 9. 44. These are but a small part of their complaints; and what can you say more than this?

Again, consider the precious promises of the word. Are they not expressly directed to you? Do you account yourself a backslider? "Return unto me, ye backsliding children, and I will receive you, saith the Lord," Jer. iii. 14, 22. Do you think yourself a sinner of uncommon size? yet, saith the Lord, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isa. i. 18. Do you say your neck is as an iron sinew, and your brow brass? yet hear the word of the Lord, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off," Isa. xlvi. 12, 13. Is there something peculiarly dreadful in your case, something that you could hardly be prevailed on to intrust to your dearest friend? yet be not afraid; for Truth has said. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," Matth. xii. 31. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7. But still, when we have said all, we are but miserable comforters. Even with the word of God in our mouths, we speak too often in vain. It is the Lord alone that can open the lips. And, O! that this may be the happy opportunity of his gracious appearance in favour of all here present, that our wounds may be healed, and our tongues unloosed to proclaim his praise! Lift up your hearts to him, while I endeavour to shew you by what means, or in what manner, the Lord is pleased to open the lips that have been long closed. This is the third particular I proposed to consider from my text.

III. I say then, that when the Lord is about to open the lips, he proceeds by the following steps:

1. "He opens the eyes." We are often in a similar case with Hagar in the wilderness. The water was spent in the bottle, and she sat down in despair. There was a well or fountain close to her, sufficient to have supplied her with water to her life's end; but she saw it not till God opened her eyes, Gen. xxi. 15—19. Just so, many a poor soul is distressed, and says, My stock is spent; I had but little grace at the best, and, alas! that little is gone. And now, if the Lord should ask some hard thing, would you not do it to obtain a supply? You would willingly take a long journey, or part with all your wealth, to have grace abounding in your hearts; but you know you cannot expect help in this way. It is true, all contrivances of our own will have no effect; but, blessed be God, they are as needless as they would be useless. We need not dig in the earth, nor climb the skies, nor cross the seas; our remedy is near, Rom. x. 6—8. We need no costly offerings of silver or gold; our remedy is cheap. Come, pore no longer upon your empty bottle, but look to the fountain, the river, the ocean of all grace. May the Lord open your eyes, as he did the eyes of Elisha's servant (2 Kings vi. 17.), and I will undertake to point you to an object that shall answer all your wants. Look unto the Lord Jesus Christ; look unto him as he hung naked, wounded, bleeding, dead, and forsaken upon the cross. Look unto him again as he now reigns in glory, possessed of all power in heaven and in earth, with thou-

sands of thousands of saints and angels worshipping before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand ministering unto him; and then compare your sins with his blood, your wants with his fulness, your unbelief with his faithfulness, your weakness with his strength, your inconstancy with his everlasting love. If the Lord opens the eyes of your understanding, you would be astonished at the comparison. Would you compare a small grain of sand upon the shore with the massy mountains which hide their heads in the clouds, and spread their roots from sea to sea? or the spark of a glow-worm with the noon-day's sun? yet there is less disproportion between these, than between the utmost capacity of your desires and wants, and the immense resources provided for you, in the righteousness, compassion, and power of our dear Redeemer. "He is able to save to the uttermost" (Heb. vii. 25.); and all our trouble arises chiefly from this, that our eyes are holden, so that we do not know him, Luke xxiv. 16. Therefore the first step towards opening the lips is to open our eyes, that we may see him, and look upon him by such a sight as unloosed the tongue of unbelieving Thomas, and constrained him to cry out, "My Lord, and my God!" John xx. 28.

2. When the eyes are thus opened, the Lord, in the next place, and by that as a means, "opens the ear." When Christ is out of sight, we are deaf to all the calls, invitations, and promises of the scripture. But a believing view of him who died that we might live, rouses the attention, and makes us willing and able to hear what the Lord will speak to his people, Psal. lxxxv. 8. And what does he say from the cross? "Look unto me, and be ye saved," Isaiah xiv. 22. "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me," John xii. 32. "Behold my hands, my feet, my pierced side; all this I bore for you," John xx. 27. "Be not afraid, only believe," Mark v. 36. "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Matth. xiv. 31. "See, sinner, how I have loved thee, I have trodden the wine-press alone," Isaiah lxiii. 3. "I have destroyed death, and him that had the power of death," Heb. ii. 14. "There is henceforth no condemnation to them that believe in me," Rom. viii. 1. And what does he say from his kingdom? "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 32. "For a season you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice," John xvi. 22. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37. "I am the first and the last;—that was dead and am alive. I keep the keys of death and hell, and save whom I will," Rev. i. 17. 18. "Cast thy burden upon me, I will sustain thee," Psal. lv. 22. "I will take away thy iniquity," Micah vii. 19. "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," Matth ix. 2 "Go in peace, and sin no more," John viii. 11. *My sacrifice, my God*, what words are these!

3. By opening the eye to see his excellence and power, and the ear to hear his gracious words, he, in the next place, "opens the heart." He breaks the prison doors, forces for himself an entrance, and sets the prisoner at liberty. He touches the rock, and the waters flow, Psal. lxxviii. 20. Now a true and filial repentance takes place; now sin appears exceedingly sinful indeed. There was a sorrow before, but it was fruitless and ineffectual; but the sight of him who was pierced for our sins, and the welcome sound of pardon proclaimed in the conscience, produce a sorrow after a godly sort, a repentance never to be repented of. Thus it was with the woman who washed our Lord's feet (Luke vii. 38. 47.); she had been a great sinner, much was forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. Thus it was with Peter: he had been a grievous backslider; he had been with Jesus upon the mount, and saw the excellent glory; he was stout in his protestation, "Though all men deny thee, yet will not I:" but he shrunk at the voice of a girl, and said, "I know not the man." When the servants spoke to him, he cursed and swore; but when Jesus looked upon him, he wept, Luke xxii. 61. 62. Do you think our Lord looked upon him with disdain and indignation? rather with a look of love; a look that at once convinced him of his sin, and gave him to understand that the Lord pitied and forgave him. This look broke his heart in pieces. He went out and wept bitterly. And afterwards, though greatly humbled as to confidence in himself, yet, when asked the question, he could boldly appeal to the Searcher of hearts, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17.

And when the eyes, the ears, the heart, are thus opened; when the understanding is enlightened, the will engaged, and the affections inflamed, the cure is wrought. Then the lips will open of course, and the mouth be filled with thanksgiving and praise. O that it would please the Lord to give to me, and to each of you, a clearer knowledge of this blessed change from heart-felt experience, than is in the power of words (of my poor words especially) to describe: "Come, my friends, let us return unto the Lord: for he hath wounded, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up," Hosea vi. 1. Verily we are all guilty in this matter; we have all provoked him by unbelief, and wandered from his good way; and therefore we live so far below our privileges, and are so often heavy and sorrowful, when we have in him grounds of continual joy. Now, let us unite in this prayer, "O Lord, open thou our lips, display thy power in the midst of us, heal all our breaches, rend the vail of our unbelief, blot out the thick clouds of our sins,

cleanse us from all our iniquities and idols, and teach our stammering tongues, and barren hearts, to shew forth the praise of thy abundant goodness."

I proceed to observe, in the last place,

IV. That if the Lord is pleased to answer our desire, and to open your lips in this manner, then you will surely praise him. You will praise him with your mouths, and in your lives; you will thankfully acknowledge his mercy, his power, and his wisdom.

1. You will praise his mercy. Is the cooling stream welcome to the thirsty soul? is a reprieve acceptable to a poor condemned malefactor? Still more welcome is a sense of pardoning love to a soul that has felt the evil and effects of sin. What! to be taken from the dunghill (1 Sam. ii. 8), and made a companion with princes! to have all our guilt and complaints removed at once! to be snatched as it were from the brink of hell, and placed in the very suburbs of heaven! to be able to say, "O Lord, thou wast [justly] angry with me [and I went mourning under a sense of thy displeasure]; but [now] thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me" (Isa. xii. 1.)! is not this a mercy? especially considering how undeserving we are of the smallest favour! And farther, the way in which it was conveyed! that the pardon, though free to us, is a pardon "bought with blood:" that it cost the Lord Jesus his life, his soul, to effect that blessed reconciliation in which we are beginning to rejoice! still more, that all we can now receive of his love is but a taste, a small thing, in comparison of what he has reserved for us! O what mercy is here! O what thanks does it call for! "O Lord, open thou our lips, and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

2. You will praise his power. I thought says the poor soul at such a time, I was fallen so low that there was no help. The more I toiled and laboured in my own strength, the farther the blessing seemed from me. I know from experience, that none but an almighty arm could relieve me. Creatures, means, and contrivances, I had tried, and tried again, but found them all physicians of no value. But now, "The right hand of the Lord has done wonderfully, the right hand of the Lord has brought mighty things to pass," Psal. cxviii. 15, 16. What shall I say? "He hath both spoken himself, and also hath done it," Isa. xxxviii. 15. The work is his; to him be all the glory. I got not this victory by my own bow (Psal. xliv. 6), neither did my own arm save me; "but the Lord himself has been pleased to shew the exceeding greatness of his mighty power in my behalf," Eph. i. 19. Therefore, "not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory and the praise," Psal. cxv. 1.

3. You will praise his wisdom. "What I do (said our Lord to Peter), thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," John xiii. 7. The mourning soul often asks the question with David, "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forsaken me? why go I mourning because of the enemy?" Psal. xlii. 9. When the Lord turns your mourning into joy, you shall know why. You will then see that there was a need (1 Pet. i. 6.) of all these things. It is to shew you what is in your hearts, to mortify the spirit of self-righteousness, "to teach you, that without him you can do nothing" (John xv. 5.), to make you wise and experienced against Satan's devices; to give you a tender sympathy and fellow-feeling in the sufferings and infirmities of your brethren, and to enable you to encourage and comfort others (2 Cor. i. 4.) who shall be hereafter in your case, by relating what you have seen and known yourself in your various conflicts and strivings against sin. These are some of the reasons why the Lord suffers his dear children to groan being burdened, and sometimes permits their enemies to gain a short advantage over them, that he may humble and prove them (Deut. viii. 2—16), in order to do them good in their latter end. And, O! with what wisdom is all this appointed! A little of it we may see at present, but we shall not have a complete view till we get safe home. Then to look back upon the way by which he led us through this wilderness, will furnish matter for eternal praise.

Farther, not only your mouths, but your lives shall praise him. What is the language of a believing heart, when the Lord pardons his sins, and binds up his wounds? It is this, "Now Lord, I am thine, thy vows are upon me, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth," Psal. cxvi. 14, 16.; and xxxi. 5. "Shall I continue in sin because grace has abounded? God forbid!" Rom. vi. 1. "I am crucified with Christ, crucified to the world, and the world to me," Gal. ii. 20; and vi. 14. "The love of Christ constrains me," 2 Cor. v. 14. "The time past is sufficient to have lived in vanity; henceforth I am the Lord's," 1 Pet. iv. 3. "Has he bound me by his tender mercies, to present myself, body and soul to his service? (Rom. xii. 1.) here, O Lord, I offer my whole self, all that I am, and all that I have, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to thee. O let me never, never, wander from thee again, but walk in the light, as thou art in the light, and have communion with thee here below, till thou shalt remove me out of the reach of sin and sorrow for ever," 1 John i. 7.

If there are any here who have neither known the loving-kindness of the Lord, nor mourned under the sense of his displeasure, I am sure your lips are closed to this hour. And should you die thus incapable of praising the God who made you, and the grace which has brought the sound of the gospel to your ears, it were better for you that you had

never been born, Matth. xxvi. 24. You have much reason to cry out, "O Lord, open thou my lips." Open my eyes to see my danger, to see the evil of my nature and life. Open my lips to confess my wickedness. Open my heart to receive thy word, that I likewise may bear a part in the praises thy people pay thee, and not perish (as without thy mercy I must do) with a lie in my right hand, Isa. xliv. 20. Consider, the time is short (1 Cor. vii. 29); death is near and may be sudden. May the Lord enable you to consider the things belonging to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes! Luke, xix. 42.

And you, my friends, who at present enjoy the light of God's countenance, who know your sins are forgiven (1 John, ii. 12.) for his name's sake, and have a happy freedom of access at a throne of grace, O be mindful of your privileges; beware of sin, beware of self, beware of Satan. Your enemy envies you your liberty; he watches you with subtilty and malice; he spreads snares for your feet; he desires to have advantage of you, "that he may sift you as wheat," Luke xxii. 31. Therefore be upon your guard, be humble, make much of secret prayer, keep close to the scriptures of God: by the words of his lips you shall be preserved from the paths of the destroyer, Psalm xvii. 4. Attend diligently upon the ordinances, and speak often one to another (Mal. iii. 16.), in love and faithfulness, of what the Lord has done and prepared for you, and of what manner of persons you ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, 2 Pet. iii. 11. Thus you shall be kept safe from evil. Jesus has prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, Luke xxii. 32. Fix your eye (Heb. xii. 2) and your heart upon him, as he that must do all for you, all in you, and all by you. And he has said, "Yet a little while, and behold I come quickly," Rev. iii. 11. Hold fast that which thou hast. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev. ii. 10, and xxii. 20.

SERMON XX.

OF THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

And we know that we are of God.——
1 JOHN v. 19.

A WELL-GROUNDED and abiding persuasion, not only that the doctrines of the gospel are true in themselves, but that we, through grace, are surely and unchangeably interested in them, is highly desirable. If we may be safe, we cannot be happy and comfortable without it, when once we have received an experimental knowledge of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the variety, subtilty, and force of Satan's temptations: and he who knows our frame and situation has, in his holy word, made a full provision for us in this respect, and declared it to be his intention, that those who flee for refuge to the hope he has set before them, might have strong consolation (Heb. vi. 18.); not be left at an uncertainty in a concern of the highest importance, but be rooted, grounded, established, and settled in the knowledge of his love, and be enabled to maintain it as an unshaken principle through every change of dispensation and frame, "that he who hath begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,' Phil. i. 6.

This animating confidence, so well suited, and so necessary to render the soul superior to all the trials of life, to inspire a noble disdain of the sinful pleasures and vain pursuits of the present evil world, and to engage the grateful exertion of every faculty and power in the service of God, is generally expressed by the word Assurance. But though the word is in frequent use, the thing itself has been, and still is, a subject of much dispute and controversy amongst professors of the gospel. Many not being conscious of such a cheering persuasion in themselves, and too hasty in supposing their attainments must be a standard to others, have ventured to deny the possibility of such an assurance, and treated every claim to it as visionary and enthusiastic. On the other hand, some have maintained the opposite extreme, and held assurance so essential to faith, that without it no person has a scriptural warrant even to hope that a work of grace is begun in his heart. This sentiment, especially when asserted by persons of undoubted character for gifts, graces, and usefulness, has greatly startled and discouraged weak and feeble-minded souls, and been too often an occasion of adding to th distress of those who rather ought to have been comforted.

Great differences of judgment have likewise obtained concerning the means whereby, the manner in which, and the persons to whom, this assurance is communicated, supposing it attainable. It is not needful to insist on particulars. Perhaps the best way to prevent or remove mistakes, is to propose the truth simply, which, so far as it takes place, will necessarily prevent the entertainment of error. I only mention in general, that there is a variety of sentiments on this point, and the most of them supported by respectable names, in order to caution you against paying too great a deference to human authority, and to urge you to praise God for your Bibles, and to be diligent in the perusal of them. If you search the scriptures, and pray for the Spirit, you may arrive to a clear

satisfaction for yourselves, no less than if all the learned were of one mind, and all of your side.

My text assures us that this assurance was possessed in the first ages of the church. There were some who could say without hesitation, "We know that we are of God;" and though they are an apostle's words, he uses them not exclusively as an apostle, but generally as a believer. The greatest part of the chapter, and indeed of the epistle, shews that he considers those to whom he was writing as partakers with him in the common privileges of christians. So likewise St. Paul joins the believing Corinthians with himself, when he says, "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1. And elsewhere he takes it for granted, that they (some of them at least) had this assurance, and presses them to a lively discharge of their duty upon that consideration: "for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

And we need make no scruple of affirming from the fullest evidence, that this precious privilege was not confined, or designed by God to be so, to the first ages of the gospel. There have been in all periods of the church, where the word and ordinances of Christ have been faithfully administered, many who could say, "We know that we are of God;" and we trust there are more than a few who can say so, and give a solid scriptural evidence of the hope that is in them, even in this degenerate day. But because arguments from facts, which must depend upon persons testimony in their own cases, are not allowed to be fully conclusive; and because the greater part of those who we hope sincerely love the Lord Jesus, live far below their just right and privilege, and are perplexed with doubts and fears, which dishonour their profession, weaken their hands, and make their lives uncomfortable: I shall endeavour at this time to state and explain the nature of assurance, to prove that it is attainable, to point out the means by which we are to expect it, and to take notice of the hindrances which keep so many who are interested in the gospel-salvation from enjoying their privilege, and make them unwilling or afraid to say, "We know that we are of God." What I have to offer on these particulars, will occur under one or other of the following propositions:—

I. Assurance is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith, but we read likewise of a weak faith (Rom. xiv. 1), a little faith (Matth. iv. 31), and faith like a grain of mustard-seed, Matth. xvii. 20. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree, and in every subject, it is universally of the same kind, and produces (according to its degree) the same uniform effects. It purifies the heart from the love and practice of sin (Acts xv. 9); it works by love to the Lord Jesus Christ, his ordinances, ways, and people (Gal. v. 6); and it enables the possessor to overcome the world (1 John v. 4), to stand fast against its frowns, and to resist the more pleasing, but not less dangerous, influence of its smiles. Each of these effects is beyond the power, and contrary to the inclination of the natural man. "No man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord" (1 Cor. xii. 3), that is, can give him the honour due to his name, renounce every other hope of salvation, and count all things but loss and dung that he may win Christ (Phil. iii. 8), "but by the Holy Ghost." Yet thus far many have undoubtedly attained, who have not assurance; but while they give sufficient evidence by their conduct that they have received precious faith in their hearts, they go mourning all the day long, and almost pass sentence against themselves as unbelievers. Now, what these mourners want, in order to their establishment and assurance, is not some new principle, which they have not yet received, but only a stronger degree of that faith which they already possess. Some good writers speak of a faith of reliance, a faith of adherence, a faith of assurance, and of the direct and reflex acts of faith, &c.; but these are not scriptural modes of expression, nor do they appear to me to throw light upon the subject, but rather to increase the perplexity of plain people, who are apt to imagine these are so many different kinds of faith. The scriptures mention only two kinds, a *living* and a *dead* faith, James ii. 17. True faith is faint and weak in its beginnings, like the life of a new-born infant, but it is growing up to maturity, and shall increase with the increase of God, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. From thence it follows,

II. The grounds and principles of faith and assurance are exactly the same. The first and lowest act of saving faith necessarily includes three things:

1. An apprehension of the sufficiency and authority of Christ to save. Men that live in their sins will rest upon a slender hope! but a conscience truly awakened must have sure grounds to go upon, and, without the discovery of such a Saviour as is revealed in the gospel, would sink into despair. It is afraid of being deceived, and is so far enlightened that it cannot be easily imposed upon; a sense of the sinfulness of sin, an impression of the majesty of God, will not suffer it to rest in any thing short of a perfect atonement and a perfect righteousness. But when the eyes of the mind are opened, and Jesus is seen as revealed by the word and Spirit of God, all scruples of this sort are silenced, and the soul perceives and feels, that he is fully equal to the mighty undertaking.

2. An application to him. This of course follows a persuasion of his ability to save; for who will sit down and perish, when there is a possibility of relief? There is, perhaps, a great questioning of Christ's willingness; but still, since there is a peradventure, a sense of distress on the one hand, and a view of his power and grace on the other, will extort a cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish" Matth. viii. 25; and xiv. 30.

3. From hence there arises a hope in his mercy, which is fainter or stronger according as the knowledge of Jesus is more or less distinct, and the surrender unto him more or less simple and unreserved, and therefore, in general, it is very faint at first; for the knowledge of Christ in a measure depends upon our knowledge of the scriptures, which testify of him, and on the proofs we have had of his wisdom, grace, and love to ourselves; but the young convert, in whom the seed of faith is but lately sown, has but little acquaintance with the word; for he has but just begun to know the value of it, and he has but little experience; though his eyes are opened, his sight is not yet confirmed, nor his spiritual senses exercised.

Farther, though he was sincerely convinced of his need of a Saviour, there is still much of a legal bias, and a principle of self-righteousness in his heart, which, so far from being removed, is not yet discovered to himself; and while he thinks he looks to Christ alone, he is looking in himself for qualifications to recommend him, and afraid to draw near with confidence, because he cannot find them. These things discourage his hopes, and demonstrate his faith to be but weak.

But the strongest and most lively assurance that we can conceive attainable in the present life, is wrought and maintained by the very same principles which have so faint an influence in the infancy of faith. Let us hear the great champion St. Paul, in the close of an exemplary, laborious life, giving an account to a dear and intimate friend of the hope that was in him. He had been honoured and distinguished for grace, gifts, and usefulness, in a peculiar manner; he had laboured more abundantly than all the apostles; he had fully preached the gospel, and gathered churches throughout a very large part of the Roman empire (1 Cor. xv. 10; Rom. xv. 19); his first call was extraordinary, by the Lord's appearing to him in glory; and some of his succeeding experiences had been no less singular, for he had been caught up into the third heavens (Cor. xii. 2): finally, his suffering for the gospel had been as great and remarkable as his services. But when he expresses his assurance of support and salvation, he says not a syllable of these things, but rests the whole upon such points as were common to him with all believers: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. We see there St. Paul's assurance was founded on, 1st, A knowledge of Jesus Christ, the object of his faith; 2dly, A consciousness of transactions which had passed between him and his Saviour,—he had committed something to him, that was, his soul with all its interests; 3dly, A persuasion of his ability, willingness, and faithfulness, to secure and preserve what he had taken charge of. And these are the very same principles which are necessary to the first act of weak faith, only here they exert themselves with their proper power and efficacy. From hence,

III. Assurance is equally open to all believers. It is not the exclusive privilege of great services or sufferings; it is not confined to apostles, ministers, or martyrs, but is a prize set before all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, being no other than the growth and establishment of that faith which they have already received. The reasons why all who believe are not happy in this assurance of hope, are to be sought, not in the will of God, who hath made abundant provision for our comfort, but in the perverseness, ignorance, and misapprehensions of our own hearts, and from inattention to his revealed word. We are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. It is not easy to enumerate the many ways in which our depravity works to keep this good thing from us. A few of the principal are these:—

1. Insincerity. Where grace is really implanted by the Holy Spirit, it will surely prevail at length, and subdue the whole soul to the obedience of faith. But in too many there is, for a long time, not only a great opposition from indwelling corruption, but a secret cleaving of the will to evil; a double-mindedness (James i. 8), a kind of halting between two opinions (1 Kings xviii. 21), so that while the desire and prayer of the soul seems expressed against all sin universally (Prov. xxiii. 26), there is still an allowed reserve of something inconsistent with light received, Psal. ix. 1. An habitual indulgence of known or suspected evil, or an habitual neglect of any known duty, will certainly prevent the growth of grace and consolation. For the Lord claims (what is his just due) the whole heart, and will not afford the strengthening light of his countenance, while any idol is deliberately set up in his presence. "Then," says David (and not till then), "shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 6. And our Lord Jesus, when asked, "How wilt thou manifest thyself unto us?" answered, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 22, 23. Till the pride and naughtiness of our spirits are conquered, and we are made willing to give up

all, to renounce whatever is contrary to his precepts, though pleasing as a right eye, and seemingly necessary as the right hand, it is in vain to expect a full and abiding assurance of his love.

2. Indolence. With respect to this valuable blessing, it may be often said, "Ye receive not, because ye ask not," James iv. 2. It is too common for those who were earnest in crying for mercy, while they thought themselves under the curse and power of the law, to grow slack and remiss in prayer soon after they obtain some hope of salvation from the gospel, and particularly they do not "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure" (2 Pet. i. 10), in the careful use of every means appointed for their establishment in the truth as it is in Jesus. Therefore that word is fulfilled in them, "The slothful soul desireth, and hath nothing," Prov. xiii. 4. They go on for months or years in a complaining, unsettled state, and deservedly, because they are not earnest in seeking, asking, waiting, knocking at the gate of wisdom, and at the throne of grace, for that blessing which the Lord has promised to those who persevere in wrestling prayer, and will take no denial.

3. Misapprehensions. These arise from a neglect of examining the scriptures, and an undue deference to the decisions of men. If assurance is supposed unattainable, it will consequently not be sought after. If it is expected as an instantaneous impression of the Spirit of God upon the mind, independent of his word, or to arise from some sudden, powerful application of a particular text of scripture, this persuasion will end in disappointment. For, though it must be allowed that the Lord does at times favour his people with peculiar manifestations of his goodness, and perhaps seal some promise especially suited to their present circumstances, with a remarkable sweetness and evidence upon their minds, yet these do rarely produce the assurance we are speaking of. These are but visits seldom vouchsafed, and quickly suspended; and those who depend chiefly on such impressions, instead of endeavouring to grow in the scriptural knowledge of Christ, are generally as changeable in their hopes as in their frame. While their affections are thus engaged, "their mountain stands strong, and they think they shall never be moved (Psal. xxx. 7); but when the cause is withdrawn, the effect ceases, and they presently relapse into their former fears and inquietudes: Not to say that expectations of this sort have a tendency to great inconveniencies, and often open a door to the delusions of enthusiasm and dangerous impositions; for Satan, when permitted, knows how to transform himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. xi. 14. If inherent sanctification, or a considerable increase of it, is considered as the proper ground of assurance, those who are most humble, sincere, and desirous of being conformed to the will of God, will be the most perplexed and discouraged in their search after it. For they of all others will be the least satisfied with themselves, and have the quickest sense of the innumerable defilements and defects which the scriptures assure us are inseparable from our best tempers and best actions. These mistakes, with others that might be mentioned, prevent many from seeking after assurance at all, and bewilder many more, by putting them upon a wrong pursuit. But what then is assurance? and how is it to be attained? I shall attempt an answer to these questions together in the next proposition.

IV. "Assurance is the result of a competent spiritual knowledge of the person and work of Christ as revealed in the gospel, and a consciousness of dependence on him and his work alone for salvation." What I apprehend necessary to make my meaning plain, will occur from a brief explanation of the terms I have made use of in this description.

1. By the term *spiritual knowledge*, I would ascribe it to the influence and teaching of the Holy Spirit of God, and distinguish it both from that speculative knowledge of divine things which natural men may acquire from books and human instruction, and likewise from that knowledge which a real believer may obtain in the same way, beyond the limits of his present experience. Those who are favoured with great outward advantages particularly the light of a clear gospel-ministry, may very soon arrive to a notional apprehension of the most important truths; but with respect to the spiritual and abiding perception of those truths, there is no effectual teacher but the Spirit of God; and we often find, that what we think we have learned of men, we have occasion to be taught again by the Lord the Spirit, for our acquisitions fail us when we have most need of them, and will not stand the trial of an hour of temptation. But, so far as we have received our views of Jesus, his person, offices, mediation, and promises, from him, we possess them, and should be able to defy an angel, if he were to propose to us any other doctrine than that which we have surely known and believed, Gal. i. 8.

2. I use the word *competent*, because there is not, that I know of, any determinate standard where to fix. When our knowledge is so far increased as to overpower the objections arising from inward corruptions, defects of obedience, unbelieving fears, and the temptations of Satan; when we can cut them short with that question of the apostle, "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died" (Rom. viii. 34), assurance follows of course. For I do not understand assurance in the strictest sense for the highest degree of certainty imaginable. Assurance itself is capable of increase; and will be so continually, while there is any darkness in our understandings, or any remaining propensity to a self

righteous spirit. Then only will our assurance be perfect, when we shall see Jesus as he is, and be completely freed from all our infirmities. For these, in whatever degree they prevail, will so far affect the strength and steadiness of our confidence in God.

3. This knowledge is wrought in us by the Spirit, through the medium of the written word. He teaches no unrevealed truths. We are not to expect that he will assure us by a voice from heaven, or by a sudden impulse upon our hearts, that our names in particular are written in the book of life; but he opens our understandings to understand the scriptures (Luke xxiv. 45), to assent to, and feel, that we are such sinners as are there described, to see the dignity and sufficiency of Christ Jesus, as God-man, the Mediator, the suitableness of his offices, the value of his atonement and righteousness, and the harmony and glory of the divine attributes, in the adorable methods of redeeming love, which renders it just, righteous, and worthy of God to justify and save the believing sinner, Rom. iii. 26. He likewise gives us to understand the freedom and security of the gospel-promises confirmed by the oath of God, and sealed with the blood of his Son. He shews us the establishment and immutability of the covenant of grace; convinces us, that there is a fulness of wisdom, grace, life and strength, treasured up in Christ, for the use and support of those who in themselves are poor, miserable, and helpless, and to be freely communicated in measure and season, as he sees necessary to support, nourish, and revive the believing soul, and to lead him in the path of perseverance to everlasting life. Such a discovery of almighty power, and unchangeable love, engaged for the infallible salvation of every believer, which they cannot lose by their own unworthiness, nor be deprived of by all the opposition which earth or hell can raise against them (John x. 28), produces a suitable assurance in the soul that receives it. And we can confidently say, "We know that we are of God," when we can in this manner know in whom we have believed.

4. Such discoveries of the person and grace of Christ are connected with a heart-felt consciousness, that the believer's dependence for all the great hopes and ends of salvation are fixed on him and his work alone. They draw forth acts of surrender and trust, and keep the mind from forming any vain scheme of hope or refuge, either in whole or in part, from any other quarter. Indeed, from the very first dawnings of faith, as I have observed, the soul is led to commit itself into the hands of Jesus; but while knowledge was weak, and the heart very imperfectly humbled, there was a secret, though unallowed, dependence upon self, upon resolutions, frames, and duties. But as Jesus rises more glorious in the eye of faith, self is in the same degree depressed and renounced; and when we certainly see that there is no safety or stability but in his name, we as certainly feel that we expect them from him, and from him only. And the Holy Spirit assists here likewise, bears a comfortable witness with our spirits (Rom. viii. 15, 16), by drawing us to a throne of grace, pleading in us as a spirit of adoption, and prompting us to renew the renunciation of ourselves, and to glory in Jesus, as made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. i. 30), from day to day. And from hence arises a solid, permanent assurance. The believer, though weak and unstable as water in himself, and though continually assaulted by a powerful combination against his peace, can look through all to Jesus, and say, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39.

What remains then, but to animate and press every sincere believer to strive, in God's appointed way, for a comfortable assurance, that they are accepted in the Beloved, passed from death unto life, and infallibly freed from all condemnation. Though this knowledge is not absolutely necessary to our safety, it is exceeding useful to make us unwearied, cheerful, and evangelical, in a course of holy obedience, to the exertion of all our powers and faculties in the service of him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and to give us courage to endure and surmount the many difficulties and oppositions which we are sure to meet with in the course of our profession. Unbelief and distrust weaken our hands, "and make our knees feeble," Heb. xii. 12. The more steadily we confide in God, the better we shall serve him; we shall be enabled to cast all our cares upon him, to rely on his promise, that he will make our strength equal to our day; and having a well-grounded expectation of receiving the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls, we shall stand fast in the evil day, and say, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy," Acts xx. 24. I would only subjoin two cautions to those who are thus minded.

1. Remember that the progress of faith to assurance is gradual. Expect it not suddenly, but wait upon the Lord for it in the ways of his appointment. As it depends upon the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, let this engage you to constancy and earnestness in prayer; and as it arises from a knowledge of Jesus, be assiduous in searching the scriptures, which testify of him. The blessing of the Lord and the hand of the diligent concur in the attainment of this benefit, Prov x

4. 22. If you persevere in this path, you will be helped forward by the experience of every day; and every dispensation of providence, as well as every exercise and frame of mind you pass through, will be sanctified, to give you an increasing conviction, that you are nothing, and that Jesus is all in all.

2. As you cannot see or maintain a sight of your interest in the covenant, but by the light of the Spirit, beware of grieving him, Ephes. iv. 30. If you indulge a careless, trifling disposition, or venture upon known sin, you will find dark clouds raised between the Sun of righteousness and your souls. Assurance is not so invariable, but that it may be affected, weakened, and perhaps for a season quite suspended, by unfaithfulness and backsliding on our part. If you have a persuasion of your interest in the love of God, that remains always the same, though prayer is restrained, the ordinances slighted, and watchfulness intermitted; take heed, lest this instead of assurance, should be vain confidence and presumption. The hope that maketh not ashamed, endears every precept and ordinance to the soul, weans the affections from low and trivial pursuits, and strengthens the exercise of every gracious principle.

As it is thus possible and desirable for a believer to "know that he is of God;" so a concern for many here present will not suffer me to close, without desiring you to consider if you have not cause to conclude, from scripture-testimony, that you are not of God. See the cause determined by an apostle: "Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God," 1 John iii. 10. And again, by another, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Are not these decisions plain and absolute? If your love and dependence are not fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, if your tempers and practice are not governed by his commands, you are not of God. Who, then, do you belong to? The whole world is divided between two masters, and ranged under opposite banners. A neutrality is impossible. If you are not of God, you belong at present to Satan; you are his captives (2 Tim. ii. 26.); he leads you blindfold; and he meditates your destruction, when you shall have worn out your lives in his miserable service. And will you continue fond of your bondage, and follow him like an ox to the slaughter? There is a redemption-price paid, there is an arm of power revealed in favour of such helpless perishing prisoners. Jesus, whom we preach, "is able to take the prey out of the hand of the mighty, and to deliver the lawful captive," Isaiah xlix. 24. The Lord help you to apply to him before iniquity is your ruin. O may he incline you to believe and be saved! Acts xvi. 31. If you reject him, you seal yourself to an aggravated condemnation, and must perish without mercy: but if you hear his voice, and call upon his name, he is able to save to the uttermost, and to bless you, in turning every one of you from your iniquities," Heb. vii. 25.; Acts iii. 26

A

REVIEW

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

INTRODUCTION.

THOUGH the actions of mankind appear greatly diversified from the influence of particular circumstances, human nature has been always the same. The history of all ages and countries uniformly confirms the scriptural doctrine, that man is a depraved and fallen creature, and that some selfish temper, ambition, avarice, pride, revenge, and the like, are, in effect, the main springs and motives of his conduct, unless so far, and in such instances, as they are corrected and subdued by divine grace.

Therefore, when St. Paul speaks of the most dreadful degree of impiety that can be imagined, enmity against God, he does not consider it as the fault of the particular time in which he lived, or impute it singly either to the idolatrous Heathens, or the obstinate Jews, but he affirms universally, that the carnal mind (το φρονημα της σαρκος), the wisdom, the most spiritual and discerning faculty of man, is enmity against God. Men differ considerably in capacity, rank, education, and attainments; they jar in sentiments and interests; they mutually revile, hate, and destroy one another: but in this point they all agree; whether Greeks or Barbarians, wise or ignorant, bond or free, the bent and disposition of their minds, while unrenewed by grace, is black and implacable enmity against the blessed God.

To those who acknowledge the authority of scripture, St. Paul's express assertion should be sufficient proof of this point, if we could produce no other; but besides the many other passages in the book of God to the same effect, it may be demonstrated by the most obvious proofs, experience and matter of fact. The history of the Old Testament from the death of Abel, the nature and grounds of the opposition which Jesus and his apostles met with, and the treatment of the most exemplary Christians that have lived in succeeding ages, are indisputable evidences of this offensive truth; for what can be stronger marks of enmity against God, than to despise his word, to scorn his favour, to oppose his will, to carress his enemies, and to insult and abuse his servants, for no other offence than their attachment to his service?

But when, from these premises, the apostle infers, "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," though the consequence is evident, it may seem at first view unnecessary; for can it be supposed that the carnal mind, which breathes a spirit of defiance and enmity against God, will have any desire or thought of pleasing him? Yet thus it is.—The carnal mind is not only desperately wicked, but deeply deceitful; it deceives others, and often it deceives itself. As the magicians of Egypt, though enemies to Moses, attempted to counterfeit his miracles, and as Balaam could say, "The Lord my God," though he was wickedly engaged against the Lord's people; so it has been usual with many who have hated and denied the power of godliness, to value themselves highly upon the form of it, and while they are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, they affect to be thought his best servants, and make the most confident claims to his favour

The pure religion of Jesus cannot but be despised and rejected by the carnal mind: the natural man receiveth not the things of God; they are beyond his sphere; he does not apprehend them, and therefore cannot approve them; nay, he is averse and unwilling to meddle with them, and therefore it is impossible he should understand them. But the fiercest opposition arises from the complication of presumption and hypocrisy we have spoken of; when men, destitute of the Spirit of God, from a vain conceit of their own wisdom and goodness, arrogate to themselves an authoritative decision in religious concerns, and would reduce the judgment and practice of others to their own corrupt standard.

Such was eminently the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, with unwearied malice, persecuted our Lord to the death of the cross; and he forewarned his disciples to expect the like treatment; he sent them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves, and assured them that their attachment to him would draw on them the hatred of mankind, so far as even to deprive them of the rights of civil society, and the pleasures of relative life. A man's foes shall be those of his own household: his parents shall forget their affection, his children their duty, his servants their reverence, and even the wife of his bosom shall despise him, when he boldly professes the gospel; nay, the most amiable qualities, joined to the most endearing connections, are not sufficient wholly to suppress the enmity which fills the hearts of the unregenerate, against those in whom they discern the image of Christ; and that this enmity would sometimes assume a religious form, and under that appearance, proceed to the greatest extremities, he informed them, in another place: "The time cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service."

If a faith and practice, agreeable to the New Testament, were not always attended with a measure of this opposition, we should want one considerable evidence that the gospel is true; and infidels would be possessed of one solid objection against it, namely, That our Lord was mistaken when he predicted the reception his doctrine would meet with. But the scriptures cannot be broken: the word of Christ is fulfilling every day, and especially in this particular. Many, perhaps, will be ready to object here, and to maintain, that, in our nation, and at this present time, the charge is invidious and false. It will be pleaded, that when Christianity had to struggle with Jews and Pagans, it could not but be opposed; but that with us, under the guard of a national establishment, an opposition to Christianity (unless by the feeble efforts of Deists and Libertines) is impracticable and inconsistent by the very terms; and that if the delusions of a few visionary enthusiasts are treated with that contempt and indignation which they justly deserve, this should not be styled an opposition to Christianity, but rather a warrantable concern for its vindication, especially as no coercive methods are used; for though some attempts have been made to restrain the leaders from poisoning the minds of the people, yet no person is injured, either in life or property, on account of his opinions, how extravagant soever they may be.

To this extenuation it may be replied,

1. I do not assert, that persecution and reproach must necessarily attend the name of a Christian, or that it is not possible to make a high profession of religion under that name, and at the same time preserve or acquire a large share of the honours, riches, and friendship of the world; but I maintain with the apostle that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The distinction he makes in these words, is observable:—So much godliness as may be professed without a peculiar relation to Jesus, the world will bear; sobriety and benevolence they will applaud; nay, even prayers, fastings, and other external acts, may be commended:—but, to live godly in

Christ Jesus,—so as to profess our whole dependence upon his free salvation to seek all our strength from his grace; to do all expressly for his sake; and then to renounce all trust or confidence in what we have done, and to make mention of his righteousness only:—this the world cannot bear; this will surely provoke the contempt or hatred of all who have not the same spirit, whether accounted Christians or Infidels, Papists or Protestants. That nothing less than what I have mentioned can be the import of living godly in Christ Jesus, I shall in due time prove by a cloud of witnesses.

2. I acknowledge, with thankfulness to God, and to those whom he has placed in just authority over us, that the interposition of stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death, in matters pertaining to conscience, has no place in our happy land:

> ——— jacet (semperque jaceat!)
> Divini imago zeli et pestis.

The spirit of persecution is repressed by the wisdom of our laws and the clemency of our princes, but we have no ground to believe it is extinct, or rather we have sufficient evidence of the contrary. Not to mention some recent instances in which power has been strained to its full extent, it is notorious that scorn, invective, and calumny (which can act unrestrained by human laws), are employed for the same ends and purposes, which, in other countries, are more speedily effected by anathemas and sanguinary edicts.

3. The opposition I am speaking of is not primarily between men and men, simply considered, but between the spirit of the world and the Spirit that is of God, and therefore the manifestation of each will be in mutual proportion. The Lord Jesus himself sustained the fiercest contradiction of sinners, because his character was superlatively excellent: his apostles, though far inferior to their Lord, expressed so much of his temper and conduct, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame in the next degree to him: As he was, so were they in the world. St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than his brethren, experienced a larger share of dishonour and ill treatment. Though educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and no stranger to Grecian literature, when he shewed himself determined to know nothing but Jesus, and to glory only in his cross, he was accounted by Jew and Gentile, as the filth and off-scouring of all things; and thus it will hold universally. If, therefore, any who sincerely espouse the gospel, meet with little disturbance or censure, it is not because the carnal mind is better reconciled to the truth than formerly in the apostles days, but because our zeal, faith, and activity are so much inferior to theirs, and our conduct more conformable to the prevailing taste around us.

4. I confess, that (as our Saviour has taught us to expect by the parable of the tares) revivals of religion have been generally attended with some incidental offences, and counterfeited by many false appearances. It has been so in times past; it is so at present; and we are far from justifying every thing, and in every degree, that the world is ready to condemn. However, we cannot but complain of a want of candour and ingenuousness in this respect also. Many who bring loud charges against what is irregular and blameable, are evidently glad of the opportunity to prejudice and alarm weak minds. They do not confine their reproof to what is erroneous and unscriptural, but endeavour, by ambiguous expressions, invidious names, and indiscriminate censures, to obscure the state of the question, and to brand error and truth with the same mark of infamy: they either cannot, or will not distinguish between evangelical principles and the abuse of them; and when

the distinction has been pointed out to them again and again, they refuse attention, and repeat the same stale misrepresentations which they know have been often refuted: they will not allow a grain for infirmity or inadvertence in those whom they oppose, while they demand the largest concessions for themselves and their adherents: they expect strict demonstrations from others, while, in their own cause, they are not ashamed to produce slanders for proofs, and jests for arguments:—thus they triumph without a victory, and decide, *ex cathedra*, without so much as entering upon the merits of the cause. These methods, however successful, are not new inventions: by such arts and arms as these, christianity was opposed from its first appearance: in this way Lucian, Celsus, and Julian employed their talents, and made themselves famous to future times.

I judge it therefore a seasonable undertaking to attempt the apology of Evangelical Christianity, and to obviate the sophistry and calumnies which have been published against it; and this I hope to do, without engaging in any controversy, by a plain enumeration of facts. I propose to give a brief delineation of Ecclesiastical History from our Saviour's time, and, that the reader may know what to expect, I shall here subjoin the principal points I have in view.

1. I shall consider the genius and characteristic marks of the gospel which Jesus taught, and shew that, so long as this gospel was maintained in its purity, it neither admitted or found a neutrality, but that all who were not partakers of its benefits were exceedingly enraged against it I shall make it appear that the same objections which have attended any reformations in later ages, were equally strong against christianity, as taught by Christ and his first disciples, and that the offences and irregularities which have been known to attend a revival of evangelical doctrine in our time, were prevalent, to a considerable degree, under the preaching and inspection of the apostles.

2. When I come to the lives and conduct of those called the *Fathers*, whose names are held in ignorant admiration by thousands, I shall prove, on the one hand, that the doctrines for which the fathers were truly commendable, and by which many were enabled to seal their profession with their blood, were the same which are now branded with the epithets of *absurd* and *enthusiastic*; and, on the other hand, that the fathers, however venerable, were men like ourselves, subject to mistakes and infirmities, and began very soon to depart from the purity and simplicity of the gospel.

3. The progress of our history will manifest that the accession of wealth and power to the christian profession proved greatly detrimental to the faith, discipline, and manners of the churches; so that, after the emperors publicly espoused the cause of Christ, the power and beauty of the gospel was gradually eclipsed. Yet, in the most degenerate times, God had a spiritual people, who, though partaking in some degree of the general declension, retained so much of the primitive truth and practice as to incur the hatred and persecution of (what is called) the christian world.

4. I shall treat of the means and instruments by which the Lord supported and revived his declining cause during several centuries:—1. In the valleys of Piedmont, Provence, &c. by Berengarius, Waldo, and others. 2. In England, by Wickliff and his followers 3. In Bohemia, by John Huss and Jerome of Prague. 4. In Germany, by Luther. Here I shall take occasion to observe, (1.) That these successive reformations were all projected and executed, so far as God was pleased to give success, upon the same principles which are now so industriously exploded by many who would be thought champions of the Protestant faith; and (2.) That Luther's reformation, the most extensive and successful, and of which we have the best accounts, was soon

followed by errors, heresies, and a numerous train of abominations (as had been the case with primitive christianity) which the Romanists, in imitation of their Pagan predecessors, joyfully laid to the charge of the doctrine which Luther preached.

5. As it was not long before the reformed countries needed a second reformation, I shall give some account of the endeavours of many good men in Germany and other places in this view, their principles, success, and the treatment they met with from those who ought to have supported them, and then I shall briefly take notice of the similar occurrences in our own country, from the end of Queen Mary's reign to the present time, together with what has been most remarkable in the history of the gospel in our American settlements.

6. I shall occasionally consider the character and conduct of those persons whom God has honoured with eminent usefulness, in the different periods of his church, point out the defects in their plan, and the mistakes which, through infirmity, in some degree blemished their undertakings.

7. Finally, to make it evident that the spiritual worshippers of God have always been a sect everywhere spoken against, I shall enumerate some of the reproachful names that have been successively fixed on them, as the mark of general contempt and abhorrence, such as Patarienes, Lollards, Huguenots, Gospellers, Puritans, Pietists, &c.

These particulars will be illustrated in the course of our history, not exactly in the order here laid down, but as the series of the narration shall require or suggest. I shall not confine myself to a nice uniformity of method, or a dry detail of facts, but shall endeavour to illustrate and apply the several incidents to the use and edification of common readers, and with a view to my primary design, which is (as I have already said) to vindicate the doctrines of the Reformation, or in other words, the main doctrines taught in the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England, from those unjust and disingenuous invectives, which are every day cast upon them, by not a few who owe all their distinction and authority to their having solemnly engaged to defend them.

Whoever considers the intricacy and variety of ecclesiastical history, and that the best collections of that sort have swelled to a number of folios, will not expect to find every thing that might have deserved a place. The life of man would hardly suffice to furnish a work of this sort in its just extent.

I must content myself with selecting a competent number of the most authentic and interesting topics from the voluminous materials already published, but which, either from the size or scarceness of the books, or the languages in which they are written, are little more known to the generality of readers, than if they had never appeared in print.

I shall avoid, as far as possible, interfering in the controversies on church-government; reserving to myself, and willingly leaving to others, the rights of private judgment, the just privilege of Christians, Protestants, and Britons.

It must be confessed, that the bulk of ecclesiastical history, as it is generally understood, is little more than a history of what the passions, prejudices, and interested views of men, have prompted them to perpetrate, under the pretext and sanction of religion. Enough has been written in this way; curiosity, nay, malice itself, need desire no more. I propose to open a more pleasing prospect; to point out, by a long succession of witnesses, the native tendency, and proper influence of the religion of Jesus; to produce the concurring suffrage of different ages, people, and languages, in favour of what the wisdom of the world rejects and reviles; to bring unanswerable proofs, that the doctrine of grace is a doctrine according to godliness, that the con

straining love of Christ is the most powerful motive to obedience, that it is the property of true faith to overcome the world, and that the true church and people of Christ have endured his cross in every age. The enemy has thrust sore at them that they might fall, but the Lord has been their refuge and support; they are placed upon a rock that cannot be shaken; they are kept (φρουρουμενοι), guarded and garrisoned by the power of God; and therefore the gates of hell have not, cannot, shall not, prevail against them.

Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
Ducit opes animumque ferro.

Olney, November, 1769.

*** A REVIEW of Ecclesiastical History, upon the plan proposed in this Introduction, was a subject the Author had very much at heart; so much so, that he had begun to prepare materials, and entered some little way upon it several years before his admission into the ministry. From the extent, however, and unforeseen difficulties of the undertaking, as well as from the many interruptions he met with in the discharge of his professional duties, and the occasional occurrences of every day, he had proceeded only the length of the two first Books, when he relinquished his design, and afterwards laid it entirely aside. However much the prosecution of this subject might have been wished, either by his friends or the public at large, it is presumed the omission will be the more readily excused, when it is considered, that the observations made with respect to the first century, seem to have been originally intended, and with very little variation will be found, to apply to every succeeding period.

A

REVIEW

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

BOOK I.

OF THE FIRST PERIOD OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I.

THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD CONSPICUOUS IN THE PERIOD ASSIGNED FOR CHRIST'S APPEARANCE. ILLUSTRATED BY A SUMMARY VIEW OF THE STATE OF MANKIND, BEFORE AND AT THE TIME OF HIS BIRTH.

WHEN the first man had fallen from the happiness and perfection of his creation, had rendered himself corrupt and miserable, and was only capable of transmitting depravity and misery to his posterity, the goodness of God immediately revealed a remedy adequate to his distressed situation. The Lord Jesus was promised under the character of the seed of the woman, as the great deliverer, who should repair the breach of sin, and retrieve the ruin of human nature. From that hour, he became the object of faith, and the author of salvation, to every soul that aspired to communion with God, and earnestly sought deliverance from guilt and wrath. This discovery of a Saviour was, in the first ages, veiled under types and shadows; and, like the advancing day, became brighter and brighter, as the time of his manifestation drew near: but it was always sufficient to sustain the hopes, and to purify the hearts of the true worshippers of God. That the patriarchs and prophets of old were, in this sense, Christians, that is to say, that their joy and trust centred in the promised Messiah, and that the faith, whereby they overcame the world, was the same faith in the same Lord with ours, is unanswerably proved by St. Paul in several passages (Rom. iv.; Gal. iii. 16, 17.); particularly in Heb. xi., where he at large insists on the characters of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, to illustrate this very point.

At length, in the fulness of time, as the apostle speaks (Gal. iv. 4.), the time marked out by the ancient prophecies, the time to which all the previous dispensations of Divine Providence had an express reference and subordination, and which was peculiarly suited to place the manifold wisdom of God, and the truths of divine revelation, in the clearest light; the long-expected Messiah appeared as the surety and Saviour of sinners, to accomplish the great work of redemption. For these purposes, he was born of a virgin of the family of David, at the town of Bethlehem, as the prophets had foretold. This great event took place in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Augustus Cæsar, computing from the battle of Actium; and, according to the most received authorities [a], almost 1920 years from the calling of Abraham, and about 4000 from the creation.

The pride and vanity of man, which prompt him to cavil with his Maker, and to dispute when he ought to obey, have often objected to the expedience and propriety of this appointment. It has been asked, If Christ's appearance was so absolutely necessary, why was it so long deferred? Or, if mankind could do without him for so many thousand years, why not longer, or for ever? In attempting a solution of this difficulty, some well-meaning persons, from a too earnest desire to render the counsels of God more acceptable to the narrow apprehensions of unsanctified reason, have given up the ground they ought to have maintained,

[a] Bossuet. Univ. Hist. Prideaux, Connect.

and made such concessions, as (if extended to their just consequence) would amount to all that the most hardened infidel can desire. The most direct and proper answer is suggested by St. Paul (Rom. ix. 20.) on a similar occasion, Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? * That the will and wisdom of the Creator should direct and limit the inquiries of his rational creatures, is a principle highly consonant to right reason itself. And there can hardly be a stronger proof of human depravity, than that this argument is so generally esteemed inconclusive. But waving this, a sufficient answer may be made from the premises already advanced.

God was not a debtor to sinful men. He might have left them all to perish, as he left the sinning angels, without the least impeachment of his goodness; but his mercy interposed, and he spared not his own Son, that sinners might be saved in a way consistent with his perfections. But though, in compassion to us, he provided the means of salvation, we cannot wonder that, in justice to himself, he laid the plan in such a manner as might most clearly illustrate the riches of his own grace, and most effectually humble and silence the pardoned offenders, to prevent their boasting and trusting in themselves, and to give them the most affecting views of his unmerited goodness. We may therefore humbly conceive one reason why Christ was no sooner manifested in the flesh, to have been, that the nature, effects, and inveteracy of sin, might be more evidently known, and the insufficiency of every other means of relief demonstrated by the universal experience of many ages.

What is the history of mankind but a diffusive exemplification of the scripture-doctrines concerning the dreadful nature and effects of sin, and the desperate wickedness of the heart of man? We are accustomed from our infancy to call evil good and good evil. We acquire an early prejudice in favour of heroes, conquerors, and philosophers. But if we consider the facts recorded in the annals of antiquity, divested from the false glare and studied ornaments with which the vanity of writers has disguised them, they will afford but a dark and melancholy review. The spirit of the first-born Cain appears to have influenced the whole human race. The peace of nations, cities, and families has been continually disturbed by the bitter effects of ambition, avarice, revenge, cruelty, and lust. The general knowledge of God was soon lost out of the world; and when his fear was set aside, the restraints, dictated by the interests of civil society, were always too weak to prevent the most horrid evils. In a word, the character of all ages and countries before the coming of Christ (a few excepted, where the light of revelation was afforded) is strongly, though briefly, drawn by St. Paul:—*Foolish* and infatuated to the highest degree, *disobedient* to the plainest dictates of nature, reason, and conscience, *enslaved* * *to divers* dishonourable *lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful* and abominable in themselves, and incessantly *hating* and worrying one another, Titus iii. 3.

It would be more easy than pleasant to make out this charge by a long induction of particulars; and, without having recourse to the most savage and uncultivated, the proof might be rested on the character of the two most celebrated and civilized nations, and at the time of their greatest refinement, the Greeks and the Romans. St. Paul (Rom. i. 21—32.) has given us the result of their boasted improvements in arts and sciences, in war and commerce, in philosophy and literature; and he says no more than is abundantly confirmed by their own poets and historians.† Notwithstanding the marks and fruits of fine taste and exalted genius which were found amongst them, they were habitually abandoned to the grossest vices. Devoted to the most stupid *idolatry*, they worshipped the works of their own hands, nay, erected altars to their follies and passions. Their moral characters were answerable to their principles. Without *natural affection*, they frequently exposed their helpless infants to perish. They burned with *lusts*, not to be named without horror, and this not the meaner sort only, or in secret, but some of their finest spirits and most admired writers‡ were sunk so low as to glory in their shame, and openly avow themselves the disgrace of humanity. In their public concerns, notwithstanding their specious pretences, they were *covenant-breakers, implacable, unmerciful*, and *unjust*. Guilty of the severest oppression, while they boasted highly of equity and moderation,§ as was particularly manifested on the destruction of Carthage and Corinth; two memorable instances of the spirit of a government so undeservedly admired in after times. And as the Roman power, so the Grecian eloquence, was perverted to the worst purposes.

* It is observable in this passage, that the apostle foresees and states the great objection which would be made to his doctrine, but does not attempt to answer it any farther, than by referring all to the will of him who formed the whole mass, and has a right to dispose of it. Had succeeding writers and teachers imitated his example, declared the plain truth in plain words, and avoided vain and endless reasonings, how many offences would have been prevented!

* *Enslaved.* So the original term may be emphatically rendered—At the controul of various and opposite passions, hurried about by them all in their turns, and incapable of resisting or refusing the motions of any.

† An affecting comment on this passage might be collected from Horace, Juvenal, Sallust, and Suetonius.

‡ See Virgil, Eclog. 2.

§ See Acts xxvii. 42. The soldiers would have killed all the prisoners, right or wrong, rather than one of them should have a possibility of escaping; and in this, without doubt, they consulted their own safety, and the spirit of their laws. Why, then, were the Romans so much admired? Could there be a greater proof of cruelty and injustice found amongst the most barbarous nations, than to leave prisoners, who might possibly be innocent, exposed to the wanton caprice of their keepers?

—to palliate crimes, to consecrate folly, and to recommend falsehood under the guise and semblance of truth.

Such was the character of the people reputed the wisest and the best of the heathens, and particularly so at the birth of Christ, when the Roman empire was at the summit of authority and splendour. A long experience had shewn the general depravity to be not only inveterate, but incurable. For during several preceding ages, a reformation had been desired and attempted. The principal leaders in this commendable design were called philosophers, and many of their writings are still extant. It must be acknowledged that some of them had a faint view of several important truths; but as they neither knew the cause and extent of the disorder, nor the only effectual remedy, they met with little success. Their schemes were various, inconsistent, and even opposite, and each party more successful in opposing the fallacy of other sects than in maintaining their own. Those who came nearest the truth, and were in earnest to promote it, were very few. Even these were ignorant of some things absolutely necessary to the attainment of the desired end. The best of them were restrained by the fear of men and a regard to established customs. What they could and did propound, they had no sufficient authority or influence to impress upon the consciences of men. And if, in a few instances, they seemed to succeed, the advantage was only imaginary. Where they prevailed on any to relinquish intemperance, they made them full amends by gratifying their pride. The business passed from hand to hand, from sect to sect, but all to no purpose. After innumerable disputations, and volumes concerning the supreme good, the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, and other high-sounding topics, they left matters as bad or worse than they found them. They could not effectually inculcate their doctrine upon a single village or family. Nay, they were but half persuaded themselves, and could not act up to their own principles,* when they most needed their support.

A still more affecting view of the degeneracy of human nature we have in the history of the Israelites, whom God was pleased to set apart from the rest of mankind, for several important purposes. He revealed himself to this people when they were groaning under a heavy bondage in Egypt, from which they had neither spirit nor power to deliver themselves; he freed them from their captivity by a series of illustrious miracles; he led them through the sea and the desert; he honoured them with the symbols of his immediate presence; was a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them; he spoke to them with an audible voice, and fed them with manna from heaven; he put them in possession of a good land, and fought against all their enemies. Might it not have been expected that a people so highly favoured and honoured, should have been obedient and thankful? Some of them were so; his grace always preserved a spiritual people amongst them, whose faith in the Messiah taught them the true meaning of the Levitical law, and inspired them with zeal and sincerity in the service of God. But the bulk of the nation was always refractory and disobedient. While in the wilderness they murmured against the Lord upon every new difficulty. Within a few days after the law had been delivered in flames and thunder from the top of Sinai, they formed a molten calf to worship, and would have made a captain who might lead them back to Egypt. They despised the good land, therefore their carcases fell* in the wilderness, 1 Cor. x. 5. Their posterity retained the same spirit; they learned the ways of the Heathen, whom the Lord cast out before them; they adopted every idolatrous practice; they transgressed every divine command. During a long succession of warnings, chastisements, and deliverances, they became worse and worse, so that, in Jeremiah's time, they equalled or exceeded the Heathens around them in ignorance and wickedness. They mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and misused his prophets, till his wrath arose against them, and there was no remedy. At length their land was laid waste, Jerusalem burnt, the greater part of the people destroyed, and the remainder carried captives into Chaldea.

Upon their return from captivity, they seemed for a little while to retain a sense of their duty and of the judgments they had suffered. But all was soon forgot. Their wickedness now put on a new form, and discovered the evil of the heart of man in a new point of view. They were no longer prone to idolatry. They avoided the most distant appearance of it with scrupulous exactness, and professed the highest attachment to God. They boasted themselves in his law; and, from a presumption that they were his peculiar people, they despised and hated the rest of mankind. It is not our present concern closely to follow their history. Let it suffice to say that, by substituting a regard to the letter of the law in the place of spiritual obedience, and by presuming to multiply their own inventions and traditions,† and to hold them no

* Witness the prevarication of Socrates, and the irresolution of Cicero, towards the close of their lives.

* They were overthrown (κατεστρωθησαν), they fell in heaps, like grass before the scythe, in the wilderness; and this, after all the great things they had seen and been partakers of. Of the many hundred thousands who were above twenty years old when they were delivered from Egypt, only two persons were spared to enter the promised land; a striking admonition to us not to rest in the participation of external privileges of any kind, for these people had seen the Lord's wonders at the Red-Sea, had rejoiced in the destruction of the Egyptians, and been fed with manna from heaven.

† See one instance, Matth. xv. 5. The expression is rather obscure, but the sense is: "What you might ex

less binding than the positive commands of God; they, by degrees, attained to a pitch of impiety unknown to former times, and which was so much the more offensive and abominable, as it was covered with the mask of religion, and accompanied with a claim to superior sanctity.

Pride, hypocrisy, and interest, divided them into sects; and the contests of each party for superiority threw the state into frequent commotions. Their intrigues at length brought upon them the Roman power. The city was taken by Pompey; and though they afterwards retained a shadow of liberty, their government was determined from that time by the will of the conquerors. At length Herod, a foreigner, obtained it. In his reign Christ was born.

Thus the state of mankind, before the coming of Christ, proved, with the fullest evidence, the necessity of his interposition. And, in the mean time, the world had not been left utterly helpless and hopeless. His future advent had been revealed from the beginning; and by faith in that revelation a remnant had subsisted in every age, who had triumphed over the general evil, and maintained the cause of God and truth. It was not necessary to the salvation of these, that he should have been manifested sooner; for they beheld his day afar off, and rejoiced in his name. With respect to others, destitute of divine faith, his incarnation would have had the same effect at any period as it had on multitudes who actually saw him in the flesh, but, offended with the meanness of his circumstances, and the great honours he vindicated to himself, rejected him with disdain.

But farther, the late appearance of Christ in the world gave room for the full accomplishment of the prophecies concerning him, which had been repeated at different times, with increasing clearness and precision; insomuch that the time, place, and every circumstance of his birth, life, and death, had been distinctly foretold. Thus the truth and authority of the Old Testament were confirmed, and the wisdom, power, and providence of God, overruling and directing the contingencies of human affairs, to produce this grand event in its determinate period, were displayed to the highest advantage. And as the state of the moral world made his presence highly necessary, so God, in due time, disposed the political state of mankind in such a manner as to prepare the way for a speedy and general publication of the gospel through the world.

It would be pleasing to consider how the rise and fall and change of empires were made successively subservient to introduce the kingdom of Jesus. But this would lead me beyond my present bounds. I can only just hint at two or three events, which had a more general influence. The first is, The rapid progress of Alexander, whose extensive conquests, divided amongst his successors, laid the foundation of four powerful monarchies, and opened an intercourse between countries till then unknown to each other. By this means the Greek tongue became familiar and common to many nations; and, soon after, the Hebrew scriptures were translated into that language, and the prophecies concerning the Messiah were laid open to the Gentiles. To this may be added the several dispersions of the Jews, who, upon various occasions, had been settled in almost every considerable city under the heathen governments. By their traditions and prophecies, imperfectly understood, a general expectation had been raised of some extraordinary deliverer, who would shortly appear. Lastly, by the growth of the Roman empire, many nations and people, who were before acquainted by means of one common language, became more closely united under one dominion. Every province had a necessary connection with Rome, and Rome was the centre and resort of the greatest part of the then habitable world.

As to the Jews, many things concurred to animate their wishes and expectations of the Messiah's approach. The prophecies were in their hands. Many of their wise men were apprised, that the term of seventy weeks, spoken of by Daniel, was drawing to a period. The sceptre seemed departing from Judah: they groaned under a foreign yoke, from which they vainly imagined the Messiah would set them free, and give them, in their turn, a temporal dominion over the nations of the earth. Though this mistake prompted them to reject Christ, when he preached a deliverance unsuitable to their worldly notions, yet it made them solicitous and eager for the appearance of the person on whom their hopes were fixed. A few amongst them, however, better instructed in the true meaning of the prophecies, were secretly waiting in the exercises of faith and prayer for the consolation of Israel, Luke, ii. 3.

From this general view of the moral and political state of mankind, and the leading designs of divine revelation and providence, previous to the birth of Christ, we may conclude, that the time fixed on, from before the foundation of the world, for his actual exhibition amongst men, was not an arbitrary, but a wise and gracious appointment; a determination admirably suited to place the most important truths in the strongest light. In this way the depravity, misery, and helplessness of man the mercy of God, and the truth of

peet from me for your support, I have put out of my own power; it is devoted to the service of God and the temple." And teachers allowed this to be a legal exemption. Any man who would pay handsomely to the priests and the temple, might treat his parents as he pleased. Thus they set aside the express command of God, by their own authority, and for their own advantage. The same dispensing, commuting, engrossing spirit has too often appeared in the christian church

the scriptures, were unquestionably proved to all succeeding times. The necessity of a Saviour was felt and acknowledged; and the suitableness, all-sufficiency, and condescension of Jesus, when he undertook and accomplished the great designs in which his love engaged him, were more strongly illustrated by the preceding contrast. He knew the whole human race were sinners, rebels, enemies against God. He knew the terms, the price of our redemption, that he must obey, suffer, weep, and die: Yet he came. He emptied himself of his glory and honour, and took on him the form of a servant, to bring the glad tidings of salvation to men. In effect, the gospel of Christ soon appeared to be the great *desideratum*, and completely redressed the evils which philosophy had given up as desperate. The genius and characteristic marks of this gospel will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

THE CHARACTER AND GENIUS OF THE GOSPEL, AS TAUGHT AND EXEMPLIFIED BY CHRIST.

A SUCCINCT history of the life of our Lord and Saviour is no part of our plan. This the inspired evangelists have performed with the highest advantage and authority; and their writings (through the mercy of God) are generally known and read in our own tongue. It will be sufficient for me to select a few passages from them, to explain and confirm the several points I have proposed to treat of in this book, as principles whereon to ground our observations on the spirit and conduct of after-times.

At present I propose to state the true character and genius of his doctrine. This may seem a digression from my main design. But as I shall often have occasion to speak of the gospel, and the opposition it has met with, it will not be improper, in the first place, to exhibit a general idea of what we mean by the gospel, especially as the professed followers of Christ have been, and still are, not a little divided upon the point.

We may describe the gospel to be—"A divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ, discovering the misery of fallen man by sin, and the means of his complete recovery by the free grace of God, through faith, unto holiness and happiness." The explanation and proof of these particulars, from our Lord's express declarations, and the tenor of his conduct, will sufficiently point out the principal marks and characters of his gospel. But, before we enter upon this, two things may be premised

1 Though I confine myself to the writings of the evangelists in this disquisition, yet it should be remembered, that whilst our Lord was visibly conversant with men, he did not ordinarily discover the whole system of his doctrine in express terms. He spoke to the multitude, for the most part, in parables (Matth. xiii. 10, 11.), and was not forward to proclaim himself the Messiah upon every occasion, Matth xvi. 20. And even in his more intimate discourses with his disciples (John, xvi. 12—25.), he taught them with a wise and gracious accommodation to their circumstances and weakness.* The full explanation of many things he referred to the time when, having accomplished his wish, and returned victorious and triumphant into heaven, he should send down, according to his promise, the Holy Spirit, to enlighten and comfort his people. Then, and not before, they fully understood the meaning of all they had seen and heard while he was with them, Mark, ix. 10; John ii. 22.

2. The doctrine of the gospel is not like a mathematical problem, which conveys precisely the same degree of truth and certainty to every one that understands the terms. If so, all believers would be equally enlightened, who enjoy the common privilege of the written word. But there is, in fact, an amazing variety in this respect. Where this doctrine is truly understood, though in the lowest degree, it inspires the soul with a supreme love to Jesus, and a trust in him for salvation. And those who understand it best, have not yet received all the evidence, comfort, and influence from it, which it is capable of affording. The riches of grace and wisdom in this dispensation are unsearchable (Eph. iii. 8.) and immense, imparted in different measures, and increased from time to time, according to the good pleasure (1 Cor. xii. 11.) of the Spirit of God, who furnishes his people with light and strength proportioned to their exigencies, situation, and the services or trials he calls them to; not without respect to the degree of their diligence, obedience, and simplicity, in waiting upon him. For these reasons, it is not to be expected, that every one who serves God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son, should have exactly the same views of this sublime subject. Neither do I presume to think myself capable of displaying it in its full light and beauty. I desire, therefore, to write with candour, and entreat a candid perusal, as conscious of my infirmities, and the imperfections necessarily attending the human mind, in this present state of things. Yet I am not afraid to express my

* Our Lord taught his disciples gradually; their knowledge advanced as the light, or (according to his own beautiful simile) first the blade, then the ear; first green corn, then fully ripe. He considered their difficulties, he made allowances for their infirmities. It is to be wished his example was followed by all who teach in his name. Some are so hasty, they expect to teach to others, in one discourse or interview, all that they have attained themselves by the study and experience of many years.

just confidence, that I shall advance no principle, as a part of the gospel-doctrine, which does not assuredly belong to it.

I now proceed to explain and confirm the definition I have given of the gospel.

1. It is a divine revelation, a discovery of truths, which, though of the highest moment, could have been known no other way. That God will forgive sin, is beyond the power of unassisted reason to prove. The prevailing custom of sacrifices, is indeed founded upon such a hope; but this practice was, without doubt, derived from revelation, for reason could not have suggested such an expedient. And those among the Heathens, whether priests or philosophers, who spoke of forgiveness of sin, knew but little what sin was. Revelation was needful to discover sin, in its true nature and demerit; and where this is known, the awakened and wounded conscience is not easily persuaded, that a just and holy God will pardon iniquity; so likewise the immortality of the soul, after all the fine things said upon the subject, remained a problematical point among the Heathens. Their best arguments, though conclusive to us, were not so to themselves. When they laid aside their books, and returned to the common affairs of life, they forgot the force of their own demonstrations.* But the gospel of Christ is an express, complete, and infallible revelation, as he himself often assured his hearers, John vii. 16. and viii. 26.

And as the subject-matter of the gospel contained in the New Testament is a revelation from God, so it is only by a divine revelation, that what is there read or heard, can be truly understood. This is an offensive assertion, but must not be omitted when the question is concerning the marks and characters of Christ's doctrine. Thus when Peter made that noble confession, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord answers, "Blessed art thou Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matth. xvi. 16, 17. If Peter could read, and had the scriptures to peruse, these were advantages derived from flesh and blood, from his birth, parents, and teachers; advantages which the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord's most inveterate enemies, enjoyed in common with him. The difference lay in a revelation of the truth to his heart. As it is said in another place, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes."†

2. It is a revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. As a revelation, it stands distinguished from all false religions; and as revealed in the person of Jesus, it is distinguished from all former dispensations of the true God, who, in time past, had spoken by the prophets, but was pleased in those last days to speak unto us by his Son. The law was given by Moses, both to enforce the necessity of an universal sinless obedience, and to point out the efficacy of a better Mediator; but grace and truth, grace answerable to the sinner's guilt and misery, and truth, and the full accomplishment of all its typical services, came by Jesus Christ. All the grand peculiarities of the gospel, centre in this point, the constitution of the person of Christ, Col. ii. 3, 9.; John xvii. 3. In the knowledge of him standeth our eternal life. And though our Lord, on some occasions, refused to answer the captious questions of his enemies, and expressed himself so as to leave his hearers in suspense, yet at other times, he clearly asserted his own just rights and honours, and proposed himself as the supreme object of love, trust, and worship, the fountain of grace and power, the resurrection, life, and happiness of all believers.

That he vindicated to himself those characters and prerogatives which incommunicably belong to God, is evident from the texts referred to. He was a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Matth. ix. 2, 3.): he forgave sins; he adopted the style of Supreme Majesty*: his wonderful works were proof of an almighty power; he restored sight, health, and life, with a word (Matth. viii. 3, 9, 30.; John iv. 53.); he controuled the elements (Matth. xiv. 25.; Mark iv. 39.), and shewed himself Lord of quick and dead, angels, and devils (John xi. 25, 44.; Luke iv. 34.; Matth. iv. 11, 26, 53.); and both his enemies and his friends understood his claim. The Jews attempted to stone him for making himself equal to God (John v. 18.; x. 33.); and he received from Thomas the most express and solemn ascription of deity that can be offered from a creature to his Creator, John xx. 28.

Yet all this glory was vailed. The Word was made flesh; he assumed the human nature, and shared in all its infirmities, sin excepted. He was born of a woman; he passed through the states of infancy, childhood, and youth, and gradually increased in wisdom and stature, Luke ii. 52. He was often, yea, always afflicted; he endured hunger, thirst, and weariness (Mark xi. 12.; John iv.

* Cicero frankly confesses this: "Nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior; cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum coepi cogitare, assentio omnis illa elabitur." Tusc. Quest. lib. I.

† That babes should be admitted to this knowledge, and express a certainty, where the wise are all perplexity and darkness, is extremely mortifying to human pride. But are not these the words of Christ? How arrogant, how dangerous must it be to be displeased with that dispensation at which he rejoiced!

* John viii. 58.; xiv. 9. "He that hath seen me hath seen my Father." Which of all the creatures of God dare use these words? God, in the strict sense, is invisible and inaccessible; but he communicates with his creatures, through Christ his Son, without whom he cannot be seen, or known at all. We cannot enjoy any spiritual, clear, and comfortable views of God, unless our thoughts fix upon the Man Christ Jesus; he is the door and the vail to the holy of holies; and there is no coming to the Father by any other way.

6, 7); he sighed, he wept, he groaned, he bled, he died (Mark vii. 34.; John xi. 35, 38.; Luke xxii. 44); but, amidst all, he was spotless and undefiled. He repelled the temptations of Satan (Matth. iv. 1, 12; he appealed to his most watchful enemies for his integrity; he rendered universal, unceasing obedience to the will of God, and completely fulfilled the whole law, John viii. 46.; xiv. 30.; xvii. 4. In him the perfection of wisdom and goodness shined forth. He burned with love to God, with compassion to men; a compassion which he freely extended to the most necessitous, and the most unworthy. He returned good for evil, wept for his enemies (Luke xix. 41), prayed for his murderers, Luke xxiii. 34. Such was his character, a divine person in the human nature, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. And from this union, all he did, and all he said, derived a dignity, authority, and efficacy, which rendered him every way worthy to be the Teacher, Exemplar, Lord, and Saviour of mankind.

3. In the person and sufferings of Christ, there is at once a discovery of the misery of fallen man, and the means of his complete recovery. It has already been observed, that the full explication of these truths was deferred till after his resurrection; and the subsequent writings of his apostles are useful to give us a complete view of the cause, design, and benefits of his passion. At present we confine ourselves to his own words. He frequently taught the necessity and certainty of his sufferings (Matth. xvi. 21.; xx. 28.); he spoke of them as the great design of his incarnation, that it was by this means he should draw all unto himself (John xii. 32.; v. 17.); that he was, on this account, especially, the object of his Father's complacency, because he voluntarily substituted himself to die for his people: He enforced the necessity of believing on him in this view (John iii. 14—18.); and applied to himself the prophecies of the Old Testament (Luke xxiv. 25—27.; Isa. liii.), which speak to the same purpose. Isaiah had foretold, that the Lord would lay upon him the iniquities of us all; that he was to be wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we should be healed. Here then we see the manifold wisdom of God; his inexpressible love to us commended, his mercy exalted, in the salvation of sinners; his truth and justice vindicated, in the full satisfaction for sin exacted from the Surety; his glorious holiness, and opposition to all evil: and his invariable faithfulness to his threatenings and his promises. Considered in this light, our Saviour's passion is the most momentous, instructive, and comfortable theme that can affect the heart of man. But if his substitution and proper atonement are denied, the whole is unintelligible. We can assign no sufficient reason why a person of his excellence was abandoned to such miseries and indignities; nor can we account for that agony and distress which seized him at the prospect of what was coming upon him. It would be highly injurious to his character to suppose he was thus terrified by the apprehension of death or bodily pain, when so many frail and sinful men have encountered death, armed with the severest tortures, with far less emotion.

Here, as in a glass, we see the evil of sin, and the misery of man. The greatness of the disorder may be rationally inferred from the greatness of the means necessary to remove it. Would we learn the depth of the fall of man, let us consider the depth of the humiliation of Jesus to restore him. Behold the beloved of God, perfectly spotless and holy, yet made an example of the severest vengeance; prostrate and agonizing in the garden; enduring the vilest insults from wicked men; torn with whips, and nails, and thorns; suspended, naked, wounded, and bleeding upon the cross, and there heavily complaining, that God had, for a season, forsaken him. Sin was the cause of all his anguish. He stood in the place of sinners; and therefore was not spared. Not any, or all the evils which the world has known, afford such proof of the dreadful effects, and detestable nature of sin, as the knowledge of Christ crucified. Sin had rendered the case of mankind so utterly desperate, that nothing less than the blood and death of Jesus could retrieve it. If any other expedient could have sufficed, his prayer, that the bitter cup might pass from him, would surely have been answered. But what his enemies intended as the keenest reproach, his redeemed people will forever repeat as the expression of his highest praise: "He saved others, himself he cannot save," Luke xxiii. 35. Justice would admit no inferior atonement; love would not give up the cause of fallen ruined man. Being therefore determined to save others, he could not consistently, with this gracious design and undertaking, deliver himself.

Again, the means and certainty of a salvation proportioned to the guilt and misery of sinners, and a happiness answerable to the utmost capacity of the soul of man, are revealed in the same astonishing dispensation of divine love. When Jesus was baptized, he was pointed out by a voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom (or for whose sake) I am well pleased," Matth. iii. 17. He afterwards proclaimed his own authority and sufficiency, that all things were delivered into his hands, and invited every weary, heavy-laden soul to seek to him for refreshment and peace, Matth. xi. 27—29. He gave the most express assurances that whoever applied to him should in no case be rejected, John vi. 37. He mentioned his death and sufferings (John xii. 32. 33.) as the principal circumstance that should engage the hearts, and confirm the

hopes of sinners. He gave repeated promises, that those who believe in him shall never perish (John x. 38); that neither force nor fraud should frustrate his intentions in their favour; that after his ascension, he would send the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 7, 13, 14.) to supply his bodily presence; and that his power, grace, and providence, should be with his people to the end of the world (Matth. xxviii. 20.): finally, that he would manage their concerns in heaven (John xiv. 3, 13, 14), and at length return to take them to himself, that they might be with him for ever, to behold, and to share his glory.

4. In this revelation, God has illustriously displayed the glory of his free grace. The miserable and guilty, who find themselves without either plea or hope, but what the gospel proclaims by Christ, are invited without exception, and received without condition. Though they have been the vilest offenders, they are freely accepted in the Beloved; and none of their iniquities shall be remembered any more; on the contrary, the most respectable characters amongst men are declared to be of no avail in point of acceptance with God; but, in this respect, all the race of Adam are upon equal terms, and must be involved in the same ruin, without an absolute dependence on the great Mediator. This is an illustrious peculiarity of the gospel, which the proud fallen nature of man cannot but resist and find fault with, till the conscience is truly affected with the guilt and demerit of sin. The whole tenor of our Saviour's ministry was suited to depreciate the most specious attainments of those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and to encourage all who felt and confessed themselves to be miserable sinners: *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.* This was a chief cause of the opposition he met with in his own person, and has awakened the hatred and dislike of the bulk of mankind against his doctrine ever since. It is necessary, therefore, to confirm it by proofs which cannot be evaded by any who profess to acknowledge him to be a teacher sent from God.

He was daily conversant with many who were wise and righteous in their own eyes: and we find he omits no opportunity to expose and condemn their pretensions. He spake one parable purposely to persons of this stamp (Luke xviii. 9—14.), and describes a Pharisee boasting of his observance of the law: He paid tithes, he fasted, he prayed; he was not chargeable with adultery or extortion; he could say more for himself than many can who affect to be thought religious: but the poor publican (though despicable in his sight), who, conscious of his unworthiness, durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried for mercy, was in a happier and safer condition than the other with all his boasted obedience.

Another remarkable instance is that of the ruler (Matth. xix. 16. Luke xviii. 18.), who accosted our Lord in a respectful manner, asking him, What he should do to inherit eternal life? His address was becoming: his inquiry seemed sincere; and the character he gave of himself was such as men, who see not the heart, might have judged exemplary and praise-worthy. When our Lord referred him to the precepts of the law, he answered that he had kept them all from his youth. Yet one thing, we read, was wanting. What could this one thing be, which rendered so fair a character of no value? We may collect it from the event: He wanted a deep sense of his need of a Saviour. If he had been possessed of this one thing, he would willingly have relinquished all to follow Jesus. But, ignorant of the spirituality of the law, he trusted to a defective obedience: and the love of the world prevailing in his heart, he chose rather to part with Christ than with his possessions.

On the other hand, how readily our Lord received sinners, notorious sinners, who were vile to a proverb, appears from the remarkable account given by St. Luke (chap. vii. 37), of a woman whose character had been so infamous, that the Pharisee wondered that Jesus could permit her to touch him. But though a great sinner, she found great forgiveness; therefore she loved much, and wept much * She had nothing to say for herself; but Jesus espoused her cause, and pronounced her pardon. He likewise silenced the proud caviller by a parable, that sweetly illustrates the freeness and genuine effect of the grace of God, which can only be possessed or prized by those who see they must perish without it.

And this was the general effect of his preaching. Publicans and sinners thronged to hear him, received his doctrine, and found rest for their souls. As this discrimination gave a general offence, he took occasion to deliver the parable of the prodigal (Luke, xv. 11.); in the former part of which he gives a most endearing view of the grace of God, in pardoning and accepting the most undeserving. He afterwards, in the close, shews the pride, stubbornness, and enmity of the self-righteous Pharisees, under the character of the elder brother †. While his language and deportment discovered the disobedience and malice of his heart, he pretended that he had

* She washed his feet with tears; ἤρξατο βρέχειν, she began to rain tears upon his feet: her head was waters, and her eyes fountains: to receive a free pardon of many sins, a pardon bought with blood,—it is this causes the heart to melt, and the eyes to flow.

† It may be objected to this interpretation, That the father speaks to the elder brother in terms of complacence: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." But this is not the only place where our Lord addresses the Pharisees in their own style, according to the opinion they conceived of themselves. Thus (Matth. viii. 12.), he says, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. —He does not mean those who were truly the children of the kingdom but those who pretended to be so.

never broke his father's commands. The self-condemned sinner, when he first receives hope of pardon, experiences a joy and peace in believing. This is represented by the feast and fatted calf. But the religious orderly brother had never received so much as a kid: he had found no true comfort in all his formal round of duties; and therefore was exceedingly angry that the prodigal should at once obtain those marks of favour which he, who had remained with his father, had always been a stranger to.

But the capital exemplification of this, and indeed of every doctrine of the gospel, is contained in the account given of the thief upon the cross (Luke, xxiii. 39—42.); a passage which has perhaps been more mistaken and misrepresented by commentators, than any other in the New Testament. The grace of God has shone so bright in this instance, that it has dazzled the eyes even of good men. They have attempted to palliate the offender's crime, or at least to suppose that this was the first fault of the kind he had committed; that perhaps he had been surprised into it, and might, in other respects, have been of a fairer character. They conjecture, that this was the first time he had heard of Jesus; and that there was not only some sort of merit in his faith and confession under these circumstances, but that the death of Jesus happily coinciding with his own, afforded him an advantage peculiar to himself; and that, therefore, this was an exempt case, and not to be drawn into a precedent to after times.

If it was my professed design to comment upon this malefactor's case, I should consider it in a different light. The nature of his punishment, which was seldom inflicted but on those who were judged the most atrocious criminals, makes it more than probable that he did not suffer for a first offence. Nor was he simply a thief. The history of those times abounds with the mischiefs committed by public robbers, who used to join in considerable bands, for rapine and murder, and commit the greatest excesses. In all likelihood, the malefactors crucified with Jesus were of this sort, accomplices and equals in guilt; and therefore judged to die together, receiving (as appears by the criminal's own confession on the cross) the just reward of their deeds.[a] Here was indeed a fair occasion to shew the sovereignty and triumph of grace, contrasted with the most desperate pitch of obdurate wickedness. To shew, on the one hand, that the compassion and the power of Christ were not diminished when his sufferings were at the height, and he seemed abandoned to his enemies; and, on the other, the insufficiency of any means to change a sinner's heart, without the powerful efficacy of divine grace. The one malefactor, brought at length to deserved punishment, far from repenting of his crimes, regardless of his immediate appearance before God, thought it some relaxation of his torments, to join with the barbarous multitude in reviling Jesus, who hung upon a cross by his side. He was not ignorant that Jesus was put to death for professing himself the Messiah; but he upbraided him with his character, and treated him as an impostor. In this man we see the progress, wages, and effects of sin. His wickedness brought him to a terrible end, and sealed him up, under a fatal hardness of heart: so that he died desperate, though Jesus Christ was crucified before his eyes.[b] But his companion was impressed by what he saw: his heart relented; he observed the patience of the divine sufferer; he heard him pray for his murderers; he felt himself miserable, and feared the God with whom he had to do. In this distress he received faith to apply to Jesus; and his prayer was granted, and exceeded. He who sent the fair-spoken ruler away sorrowful, answered the first desire of a malefactor at the point of death: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This certainly was an instance of free distinguishing grace. Here was salvation bestowed upon one of the vilest sinners, through faith in Jesus, without previous works, or a possibility of performing any. And as such, it is recorded for the encouragement of all who see themselves destitute of righteousness and strength, and that, like the thief on the cross, they have no refuge or hope, but in the free mercy of God through Christ.

5. The medium by which the gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation, is faith. By faith we do not mean a bare assent, founded upon testimony and rational evidence, that the facts recorded in the New Testament are true. A faith of this sort experience proves to be consistent with a wicked life; whereas the gospel-faith purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Neither do we mean a confidence of the forgiveness of sin, impressed upon the mind in a sudden and instantaneous manner. Faith is indeed founded upon the strongest evidence, and may often be confirmed by ineffable manifestations from the fountain of light and comfort; but the discriminating property of true faith is, "a reliance upon Jesus Christ for all the ends and purposes for which the gospel reveals him;" such as, the pardon of sin, peace of

[a] It seems probable, from history, that these were of Barabbas's gang. They had made an insurrection, committed murder, and were, with their ringleader, convicted and condemned. He, in dishonour to Jesus, was spared, whilst these, his accomplices, were executed with him.

[b] Compare Matth. xxvii. 39. How can it be expected that no more than a constant repetition of Christ's death, should be an invincible means of changing the heart, when the actual sight of his sufferings was attended with so little effect! Sin must be felt as the disease and ruin of the soul, and the sufferings of Jesus acknowledged as the only possible remedy, before we can truly sympathize with him, and say, "I am crucified with Christ."

conscience, strength for obedience, and eternal life. It is wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and presupposes a knowledge of him, and of ourselves; of our indigence, and his fulness; our unworthiness, and his merits; our weakness, and his power. The true believer builds upon the person and word of Christ (Matth. vii. 24.; xvi. 18.) as the foundation of his hope. He enters by him as the only door (John x. 9.) to the knowledge, communion, and love of God: he feeds upon him by faith in his heart, with thanksgiving, as the bread of life (John vi. 54—57.); he embraces his righteousness as the wedding-garment (Matth. xxii. 11.; Rom. xiii. 14.), whereby alone he expects admission to the marriage-feast of heaven: he derives all his strength and comfort from his influence, as the branch from the root (John xv. 4, 5.): he entrusts himself to his care, as the wise and good shepherd of his soul, John x. 14. Sensible of his own ignorance, defects, and his many enemies, he receives Christ as his teacher, priest, and king (John vi. 68.); obeys his preceptor, confides in his mediation, expects and enjoys his powerful protection. In a word, he renounces all confidence in the flesh (Phil. iii. 3.), and rejoices in Christ Jesus as his Saviour; and thus he attains to worship God in spirit and in truth, is supported through all the conflicts and trials of life, possesses a stable peace in the midst of a changing world, goes on from strength to strength, and is at length made more than conqueror, through him that has loved him. This is the life of faith. The degree and exercise of it is various in different persons, and in the same person at different times, as has been already hinted; but the principle itself is universal, permanent, and efficacious in all that truly believe; and nothing less than this faith is sufficient to give any man a right to the name of a christian.

6. The final cause or great ends of the gospel, respecting man, are holiness and happiness (Matth. i. 21.; xxv. 34.; John xvii. 24.); the complete restoration of the soul to the favour and image of God, or eternal life begun here, to be consummated in glory. What has been already said renders it needless to enlarge upon this head; nor shall we concern ourselves here to vindicate the doctrine we have laid down from the charge of licentiousness: because it is our professed design, in the progress of this work, to prove, from the history of the church, not only that these principles, when rightly understood, will infallibly produce obedience and submission to the whole will of God, but that these only can do it. Wherever and whenever the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith have prevailed in the christian church; and according to the degree of clearness with which they have been enforced, the practical duties of christianity have flourished in the same proportion. Wherever they have declined, or been tempered with the reasonings and expedients of men, either from a well meant, though mistaken fear, lest they should be abused, or from a desire to accommodate the gospel, and render it more palatable to the depraved taste of the world, the consequence has always been, an equal declension in practice. So long as the gospel of Christ is maintained without adulteration, it is found sufficient for every valuable purpose; but when the wisdom of man is permitted to add to the perfect work of God, a wide door is opened for innumerable mischiefs:—the divine commands are made void, new inventions are continually taking place, zeal is diverted into a wrong channel, and the greatest stress laid upon things either unnecessary or unwarrantable. Hence perpetual occasion is given for strife, debates, and divisions, till at length the spirit of christianity is forgot, and the power of godliness lost, amidst fierce contentions for the form.

To sum up this inquiry in a few words: the gospel is a wise and gracious dispensation, equally suited to the necessities of man, and to the perfections of God: it proclaims relief to the miserable, and excludes none but those who exclude themselves: it convinces a sinner, that he is unworthy of the smallest mercy, at the same time that it gives him a confidence to expect the greatest; it cuts off all pretence of glorying in the flesh, but it enables a guilty sinner to glory in God: to them that have no might, it increases strength; it gives eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; subdues the enmity of the heart; shews the nature of sin, the spirituality and sanction of the law, with the fullest evidence; and, by exhibiting Jesus, as made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all who believe, it makes obedience practicable, easy, and delightful. The constraining love of Christ engages the heart, and every faculty in his service. His example illustrates and recommends his precepts; his presence inspires courage and activity under every pressure; and the prospect of the glory to be revealed is a continual source of joy and peace, which passeth the understanding of the natural man. Thus the gospel filleth the hungry with good things; but it sendeth the rich and self-sufficient empty away, and leaves the impenitent and believing in a state of aggravated guilt and condemnation.

CHAP. III.

CONCERNING THE TRUE GROUNDS OF THE OPPOSITION OUR LORD MET WITH IN THE COURSE OF HIS MINISTRY: AND THE OBJECTIONS AND ARTIFICES HIS ENEMIES EMPLOYED TO PREJUDICE THE PEOPLE AGAINST HIM, AND PREVENT THE RECEPTION OF HIS DOCTRINE.

If our knowledge of the history of Jesus was confined to the excellence of his character, and the diffusive goodness that shone forth in all his actions, we should hardly conceive it possible, that any people could be so lost to gratitude and humanity as to oppose him. He went about doing good: he raised the dead, heal'ed every disease, and relieved the distresses of all who applied to him, without any difference of cases, characters, or parties, as the sun, with a rich and unwearied profusion, fills every eye with his light. Wisdom flowed from his lips, and his whole conduct was perfect and inculpable. How natural is it to expect, that a person so amiable and benevolent, so blameless and exemplary, should have been universally revered.*

But we find in fact it was far otherwise. Instead of the honours he justly deserved, the returns he met with were reproach, persecution, and death. The wonders of his power and goodness were maliciously ascribed to Satan; he was branded as an impostor, madman, and demoniac; he was made the sport of servants and soldiers; and, at length, publicly executed with every possible circumstance of ignominy and torture, as a malefactor of the worst sort.

What could be the cause and motives of such injurious treatment? This is the subject of our present inquiry. It might indeed be answered very briefly, as it has been, by ascribing it to the peculiar wickedness and perverseness of the Jews. There is not a fallacy more frequent or pleasing to the minds of men, than, while they act contrary to present duty, to please themselves with imagining how well they would have behaved in another situation, or a different age. They think it a mark of virtue to condemn the wickedness of former times, not aware that they themselves are governed by the same spirit. Thus these very Jews spoke highly of the persons of the prophets, while they rejected their testimony, and blamed their forefathers for shedding innocent blood, at the time they were thirsting for the blood of Jesus, Matth. xxiii. 29, 30. It is equally easy at present to condemn the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Pilate, the blindness of the people, and the malice of the priests, who were all personally concerned in the death of Christ. It is easy to think, that if we had seen his works, and heard his words, we would not have joined with the multitude in crying, Crucify him; though, it is to be feared, many who thus flatter themselves have little less enmity against his person and doctrine than his actual murderers. On this account, I shall give a detail of the true reasons why Christ was opposed in the flesh, and of the measures employed against him, in order to shew, that the same grounds of opposition are deeply rooted in the fallen human nature; and how probable it is, that if he was to appear again in the same obscure manner, in any country now called by his name, he would meet with little better treatment, unless when the constitution and laws of a civil government might interpose to prevent it.

But it may be proper, in the first place, briefly to delineate the characters of the sects or parties mentioned by the evangelists, whose leaders, jointly and separately, both from common and distinct motives, opposed our Saviour's ministry, and cavilled at his doctrine. These were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians.*

The *Pharisees*, including the Scribes (who were chiefly of this sect), were professedly the guardians of the law, and public teachers of the people. They were held in high veneration by the common people, for the austerity of their deportment, the frequency of their devotions, and their exactness in the less essential parts of the law. They observed the traditions of the elders, were still adding to them; and the consequence was (as it will always be in such a case), that they were so pleased with their own inventions, as to prefer them to the positive commands of God: and their studious punctuality in trifles, withdrew their regard from the most important duties. Their specious shew of piety was a fair outside, under which the grossest abominations were concealed and indulged. They were full of pride, and a high conceit of their own goodness: they fasted and prayed to be seen and esteemed of men; they expected reverence and homage from all, and challenged the highest titles of respect, to be saluted as doctors and masters, and to be honoured with the principal seats in all assemblies. Many

* The Heathen moralists have supposed, that there is something so amiable in virtue, that could it be visible, it would necessarily attract the love and admiration of all beholders. This sentiment has been generally admired: and we need not wonder, since it flatters the pride of man without thwarting his passions. In the Lord Jesus this great *desideratum* was vouchsafed; virtue and goodness were pleased to become visible, were manifest in the flesh. But did the experiment answer to the ideas of the philosophers? Alas! to the reproach of mankind, Jews and Gentiles conspired to treat him with the utmost contempt. They loved darkness, and therefore could not bear the light. They had more compassion and affection for the most infamous malefactor; therefore, when the alternative was proposed to them, they released Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, and nailed Jesus and virtue to the cross.

* See Matth. xxiii.; Mark vii. 13.; and Luke xviii 9—14.

of them made their solemn exterior a cloak for extortion and oppression; and the rest, if not hypocrites in the very worst sense, yet deceived both themselves, and others, by a form of godliness, when they were in effect enslaved by their passions, and lived according to the corrupt rule of their own imaginations.

The *Sadducees*, their antagonists and rivals, were equally, though differently, remote from the true knowledge and worship of God. They not only rejected the tradition of the elders, but a great part of the scriptures likewise; and admitted only the five books of Moses as of divine authority. From this circumstance, together with the difficulty (Matth. xxii. 23) they proposed to our Lord, and the answers he gave them, it appears, that they were persons, who, professing in general terms to acknowledge a revelation from God, yet made their own prejudices and mistakes, under the dignified name of Reason, the standard to determine what books should be received as authentic, and in what sense they should be understood. The doctrine of a resurrection did not accord with their notions; therefore they rejected it (Acts xxiii. 8), together * with those parts of scripture which asserted it most expressly. Their question concerning the seven brethren seems to have been a trite objection, which they had often made, and which had never been answered to satisfaction till our Lord resolved it. But the whole difficulty was founded upon false principles; and when these were removed, all fell to the ground at once. From this, however, we may learn their characteristic; they were the cautious reasoners of those times, who valued themselves on examining every thing closely, refusing to be influenced by the plausible sounds of antiquity and authority.

The *Herodians* (Matthew xxii. 16; Mark iii. 6) were those who endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with Herod. It is most probable that they received their name and distinction, not so much from any peculiar sentiments, as from attempting to accommodate their religion to the circumstances of the times. The Pharisees, boasting of their privileges as the children of Abraham, could hardly brook a foreign yoke; but the Herodians, from motives of interest, were advocates for Herod and the Roman power. Thus they were opposite to the Pharisees in political matters, as the Sadducees were in points of doctrine; and therefore the question concerning tribute was proposed to our Lord jointly by the Pharisees and Herodians, the former designing to render him obnoxious to the people, if he allowed of tribute, the latter to accuse him to the government, if he refused it.

From what has been said, it is evident the leading principles of these sects were not peculiar to themselves. They may rather be considered universally as specimens of the different appearances a religious profession assumes where the heart is not divinely enlightened and converted to the love of the truth. In all such persons, however high the pretence of religion may be carried, it cannot proceed from a nobler principle, or aim at a nobler object than self. These dispositions have appeared in every age and form of the christian church, and are always active to oppose the self-denying doctrines of the gospel upon different pretences. The man who, fond of his fancied attainments and scrupulous exactness in externals, despises all who will not conform to his rules, and challenges peculiar respect on account of his superior goodness, is a proud *Pharisee*. His zeal is dark, envious, and bitter; his obedience partial and self-willed and while he boasts of the knowledge of God his heart rises with enmity at the grace of the gospel, which he boldly charges with opening a door to licentiousness. The modern *Sadducee* (like those of old) admits of a revelation, but then, full of his own wisdom and importance, he arraigns even the revelation he seems to allow at the bar of his narrow judgment; and, as the sublime doctrines of truth pass under his review, he affixes without hesitation, the epithets of absurd, inconsistent, and blasphemous to whatever thwarts his pride, prejudice, and ignorance, and those parts of scripture which cannot be warped to speak his sense, he discards from his canon as interpolated and suppositious. The *Herodian* is the man, however denominated or dignified, who is governed by interest, as the others by pride, and vainly endeavours to reconcile the incompatible services of God and the world, Christ and Belial. He avoids the excesses of religious parties, speaks in terms of moderation, and is not unwilling to be accounted the pattern and friend of sobriety and religion. He stands fair with all who would be religious upon cheap terms, and fair in his own esteem, having numbers and authority on his side. Thus he almost persuades himself he has carried his point, and that it is not so impossible to serve two masters as our Lord's words seem to import; but the preaching of the pure gospel, which enforces the one thing needful, and will admit of no compliances with wordly interests, interferes with his plan, and incurs his resentment likewise, though, perhaps, he will shew his displeasure by more refined and specious methods than the clamorous rage of hot bigotry has patience to wait for.

We now proceed.—The first great cause why Jesus was rejected by those to whom he

* That the Sadducees received only the law of Moses, is the general opinion; though I do not say that it has been either indubitably proved, or universally held. That they put their own sense upon the scriptures (whether in whole or in part), which they did profess to receive, is manifest, from their asserting that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit. A tenet which contradicts not one or a few texts, but the whole strain and tenor both of the law and the prophets.

appealed, may be deduced from the tenor of his doctrine, a summary of which has been given in the former chapter. It offended the pride of the Pharisees, was repugnant to the wise infidelity of the Sadducees, and condemned the pliant temper of the Herodians. The doctrines of free grace, faith, and spiritual obedience were diametrically opposite to their inclinations. They must have parted with all they admired and loved if they had complied with him; but this is a sacrifice too great for any to make who had not deeply felt and known their need of a Saviour. These, on the contrary, were the whole, who saw no want of a physician, and therefore treated his offers with contempt.

Besides, their dislike to his doctrine was increased by his manner of enforcing it. He spoke with authority, and sharply rebuked the hypocrisy, ignorance, ambition, and avarice of those persons who were accounted the wise and the good, who sat in Moses's chair, and had hitherto been heard and obeyed with reverence. But Jesus exposed their true characters: he spoke of them as blind guides; he compared them to painted sepulchres,* and cautioned the people against them, as dangerous deceivers, Matth. xxiii. 27. It is no wonder, therefore, that on this account they hated him with a perfect hatred.

Again, they were exceedingly offended with the high character he assumed as the Son of God, and the Messiah. On this account, they condemned him to die for blasphemy. They expected a Messiah indeed, who they professed was spoken of in the scriptures; but they understood not what the scriptures had revealed, either concerning his divine nature or his voluntary humiliation, that he was to be the Son and Lord of David, yet a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. They denied his divinity, and themselves unwittingly fulfilled the prophecies that spoke of his sufferings; affording, by their conduct, a memorable proof how fatally persons may mistake the sense of the word of God, while they profess highly to esteem it.

What farther increased their contempt of his claims and contributed to harden their hearts more implacably against him, was the obscurity and poverty of his state. While they were governed by wordly wisdom, and sought not the teaching of God's Spirit, they could not but suppose an utter repugnance between the meanness of his condition and the honours he vindicated to himself. They expected a Messiah to come in pomp and power, to deliver them from the Roman yoke. For a person truly divine, who made himself equal with God, to be encompassed with poverty and distress, seemed such profane contradiction, as might justify every mark of indignity they could offer him. And this difficulty must equally affect every unenlightened mind. If man had been left to devise in what manner the Lord of the universe would probably descend to dwell a while with poor mortals in a visible form, they would undoubtedly have imagined such a scene, if their thoughts could have reached it, as is described by the prophets on other occasions: the heavens bowing, the earth shaking, the mountains ready to start from their places, and all nature labouring to do homage to her Creator. Or, if he came in a milder way, they would at least have contrived an assemblage of all that we conceive magnificent,—a pomp and splendour surpassing all the world ever saw. Expecting nations crowding to welcome his arrival, and thrones of gold, and palaces of ivory, would have been judged too mean to accommodate so glorious a guest. But the Lord's thoughts and ways are different from man's. The beloved son of God, by whom all things were made, was born in a stable, and grew up in an obscure and mean condition. He came to suffer and to die for sin, to sanctify poverty and affliction to his people, to set a perfect example of patience and submission; therefore he made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form and offices of a servant. This was the appointment of divine wisdom; but so incredible in the judgment of blinded mortals, that the apostle assures us, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord" (1 Cor. xii. 3), can perceive and acknowledge his inherent excellence and authority, through the disgraceful circumstances of his humiliation, "but by the Holy Ghost." His enemies, therefore, thought they sufficiently refuted his assertions by referring to his supposed parents, and the reputed place of his nativity.

Their envy and hatred were still more enflamed, by observing the character of his followers. These were chiefly poor and illiterate persons, and many of them had been notoriously wicked, or accounted so; publicans and sinners, whose names and professions were vile to a proverb. And for such as these, and almost these only, to acknowledge the person whom they refused, and by professing themselves his disciples (John vii. 49. ix. 34.), to set up for being wiser than their teachers; this was a mortification to their pride, which they could not bear, especially when they found their number daily to increase, and therefore could not but fear their own influence would proportionably decline.

Once more: Mistaking the nature of his kingdom, which he often spoke of, they opposed him from reasons of state. They feared, or pretended to fear, that if they suffered him to go on, the increase of his disciples would

* Nothing is more loathsome to our senses than a corpse in the state of putrefaction, or a more striking contrast to the outside of a sumptuous ornamented monument. Perhaps the visible creation does not afford any other image that would so strongly express the true character of hypocrisy, and how hateful it appears in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and before whom all things are naked and open.

give umbrage to the Romans, who would come and take away both their places and their nation, John xi. 49. Some perhaps really had this apprehension; but it was more generally a pretence, which the leaders made use of to alarm the ignorant. They were in truth impatient of the Roman yoke, prone to tumults, and ready to listen to every deceiver who promised them deliverance, under pretence of being their expected Messiah But from enmity and opposition to Jesus, they became loyal at once. So they might accomplish their designs against him, they were content to forget other grievances, and openly professed, they would have no other king but Cæsar.

These were some of the chief motives which united the opposite interests, and jarring sentiments of the Jewish sects against our blessed Lord. We are next to consider the methods they employed to prejudice the multitudes against him. The bulk of the common people seldom think for themselves in religious concerns, but judge it sufficient to give up their understandings and consciences to their professed teachers *. They are, however, for the most part, more unprejudiced and open to conviction than their guides, whose reputation and interest are more nearly concerned to maintain every established error, and to stop up every avenue by which truth and reformation might enter. The Jewish people, uninfluenced by the proud and selfish views of the priests and rulers, readily honoured the ministry of Christ, and attended him in great multitudes. If they did not enter into the grand design of his mission, they at least gave him testimonies of respect. When Jesus caused (Matth. xv. 31. Luke vii. 16.) the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, they glorified the God of Israel, saying, "A great prophet is risen up amongst us, God has visited his people." Now, what was to be done in this case? would the Scribes and Pharisees stand unconcerned? No; it is said in several places, they were filled with indignation †, and essayed every means to bring his person and miracles into disrepute. The methods they used are worthy of notice, having been often repeated since (as to their substance) against the servants of Christ.

1. They availed themselves of a popular mistake concerning his birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to the scriptures; but being removed from thence in his infancy to avoid Herod's cruelty, and his parents afterwards living at Nazareth in Galilee, he was supposed by many, to have been born there. Even Nathaniel was prejudiced by this mistake, but happily yielded to Philip's advice to examine for himself. But it prevented many from inquiring much about Jesus, and therefore his enemies made the most of it, and confidently appealed to the scripture, when it seemed to decide in their favour. Search and look (John vii. 42. 52.), for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. It is probable many were staggered with this objection, and thought it sufficient to invalidate all his discourses and miracles; since, let him say and do what he would, he could not possibly be the Messiah, if he was born in Galilee.

2. They urged, that he could not be of God, because he infringed the law of Moses, and broke the Sabbath, John ix. 16. This, though it may seem a groundless objection to us, was not so to many at that time, who knew not the spiritual design and meaning of the law, and perhaps had not the opportunity to hear our Lord vindicate himself. They urged this vehemently against the force of a notorious miracle, and not without some colour, from the words of Moses himself (Deut. xiii. 2.); who had warned them to beware of false teachers, though they should confirm their doctrine by signs and wonders.

3. They reproached the freedom of his conversation. Jesus was of easy access, and condescended to converse and eat with any who invited him. He neither practised nor enjoined the austerities, which carry the air of superior sanctity in the judgment of weak and superstitious minds. They therefore styled him a glutton and wine-bibber (Luke vii. 34.), a friend of publicans and sinners; that is, as they intended it, a companion with them, and a conniver at their wickedness. Nothing could be more false and slanderous than this charge, or more easily refuted, if the people would examine closely. But as it came from teachers who were highly reverenced for mortification, and as Jesus was usually attended by many with whom it was thought infamous to associate, it could not but have great weight with the credulous and indolent.

4. They laid much stress upon the mean condition of his followers. They were mostly Galileans, a people of small estimation, and of the lowest rank, fishermen, or publicans; while, on the other hand, few or none of the rulers or Pharisees, who were presumed to be best qualified (John vii. 48.) to judge of his pretensions, had believed on him. Those who are aquainted with human nature, cannot but know how strongly this appeal to the judgment of persons eminent for their learning or station, operates upon minds who have no better criterion of truth. How could a Jew, who had been from his infancy superstitiously attached to the Pharisees, suppose, that

* This is much to be lamented; for if the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch? Matth. xv. 14. When the blind lead the blind, how indeed can it be otherwise, if the former imagine they *see*, and the latter are content to be *led*! Alas for the people that are in such a case! alas for their guides!

† It is a strong symptom of hypocrisy and enmity to the gospel, to be offended with any new and remarkable displays of divine grace.

these eminently devout men, who spent their lives in the study of the law, would have rejected Jesus, if he had been a good man?

5. When, notwithstanding all their surmises, multitudes still professed high thoughts of Jesus, beholding his wonderful works, they proceeded with the most blasphemous effrontry to defame the miracles they could not deny, and maliciously ascribed them to the agency of the devil, Matth. xii. 14. This pertinacious resistance to the conviction, both of their senses and consciences, was the highest stage of impiety, and constituted their sin, as our Lord assured them, unpardonable. Not that any sin, considered in itself, is too great for the blood of Jesus to expiate; but as they utterly renounced and scorned his mediation, there remained no other sacrifice, but they were judicially given up to incurable impenitence and hardness of heart. Yet it is probable, that even this black assertion was not without influence upon some, who were wedded to their sins, and therefore glad of any pretext, how unreasonable soever, to refuse the testimony of truth.

6. Another means they made use of, the last we shall enumerate, and not the least effectual to intimidate the minds of the people from acknowledging Jesus, was the convincing argument of violence and ill treatment. Having the power in their hands they employed it against his followers, and made an agreement, that whoever confessed he was Christ, should be put out of the synagogue (John ix. 22.), that is, *excommunicated*. This decree seems to have been made by the Sanhedrim, or great council, and to imply, not merely an exclusion from the rights of public worship, but likewise a positive punishment equivalent to an *outlawry* with us. The fear of incurring this penalty (John xii. 42.) restrained the parents of the man born blind, and prevented many others who were in their hearts convinced that he was the Messiah, from owning him as such. They loved the world; they preferred the praise of men to the praise of God; and therefore remained silent and neuter.

From such motives, and by such methods, our Lord was resisted and opposed by the heads of the Jewish nation. The scribes and teachers, to whom the key of knowledge was by authority committed, disdained to use it themselves, and those who were willing they hindered. Had they been wise and faithful, they would have directed the people to Christ; but, on the contrary, they darkened the plainest scriptures, and perverted the clearest facts, to prevent, if possible, his reception. In vain he spoke as never man spoke, and multiplied the wonders of his power and love in their presence. In vain to them.—They pursued him with unwearied subtlety and malice *, traduced him to the people and to the government, and would be satisfied with nothing less than his death; so obstinate and wicked is the heart of man, so fatal are the prejudices of pride and worldly interest. For as we observed before, these tempers were not peculiar to the Jews they are essential to depraved nature and operate universally, where the grace of God does not make a difference. To this hour the gospel of Christ is opposed upon the same grounds, and by the like artifices, as were once employed against his person.

The doctrines which his faithful ministers deduce and enforce from the written word, are no other than what he himself taught, namely, a declaration of his personal honours and authority, of the insufficiency of formal worship, in which the heart is not concerned, of the extent and spirituality of the law of God, and of salvation, freely proclaimed to the miserable, through faith in his name. The self-righteous, the self-wise, and all who are devoted to the pleasures and honours of the world, have each their particular exceptions to these truths. The wisdom of God they account foolishness; and the language of their hearts is, We will not have this man to reign over us. And the success of these doctrines, which is chiefly visible among such as they have been accustomed to despise, is equally offensive; yet so inconsistent are they, that if here and there a few persons, who were before eminent for their rank, attainments, or morality, are prevailed on to account all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord, this, instead of removing their first objection, excites their rage and contempt still more.

And as the motives of their hatred, so their methods of expressing it, are the same. They are not ashamed to adopt and exaggerate the most vulgar misconceptions; they set the scripture at variance with itself; and while they pass over the plainest and most important passages unnoticed, they dwell upon a few texts of more dubious import, and therefore more easily accommodated to their sense. With these they flourish and triumph, and affect an high zeal in defence of the word of God. They reproach the pure gospel as licentious, because it exposes the vanity of their singularities and will-worship, and are desirous to bind heavier burdens upon men's shoulders, which few of themselves will touch with one of their fingers. They enlarge on the weakness and ignorance of those who mostly receive the new doctrine, and entrench themselves under the sanction of learned and dignified names. They even venture to explode and vilify the evident effects of God's grace, and ascribe the agency of his Spirit to enthu-

* Mark xii. 13. They sent unto him certain of the Pharisees *to catch him*. Αγρευω expresses the art and assiduity of sportsmen, in the various methods they use to ensnare, entangle, or destroy their game. It well suits the spirit and design of our Lord's enemies in the question proposed, and is finley contrasted by the meekness and wisdom of his answer

nasm, infatuation, and madness, if not expressly to diabolical influence. And, lastly, so far as divine providence permits, they shew themselves actuated by the primitive spirit of oppression and violence, in pursuing the faithful followers of the truth with censures and penalties.

But let who will rage and imagine vain things, Jesus is the King in Zion. He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. There were a happy few in the days of his flesh, who beheld his glory, trusted on him for salvation, and attended him amidst the many reproaches and sufferings he endured from sinners. Of these his first witnesses, we are to speak in the following chapter. His gospel likewise, though opposed by many, and slighted by more, is never preached in vain. To some it will always be the power and wisdom of God; they know in whom they have believed, and therefore are not ashamed to appear in his cause against all disadvantages. Supported and encouraged by his Spirit, they go on from strength to strength, and are successively made more than conquerors, by his blood and the word of his testimony.

CHAP. IV.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CALLING AND CHARACTERS OF OUR LORD'S APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES PREVIOUS TO HIS ASCENSION.

FROM what has been observed in the preceding chapters, it is evident, that those who assert a principle of free will in man, sufficiently enabling him to chuse and determine for himself, when the truths of the gospel are plainly laid before him, do thereby (as far as in them lies) render the salvation of mankind highly precarious, if not utterly hopeless and impracticable. Notwithstanding God was pleased to send his own Son with a gracious message; notwithstanding his whole life was a series of wonders, and all his actions discovered a wisdom, power, and goodness answerable to his high character; notwithstanding the time, manner, and design of his appearance and sufferings had been clearly foretold; yet, so far as a judgment can be made from the event, he would certainly have lived and died in vain, without influence or honour, without leaving a single disciple, if the same grace that provided the means of redemption, had not engaged to make them effectual, by preparing and disposing the hearts of sinners to receive him.

In the account given us by the evangelists of those who professed themselves his disciples, we may discern, as in miniature, the general methods of his grace; and, comparing his personal ministry with the effects of his gospel in all succeeding times, we may be assured that the work and the power are still the same. The choice he made of his disciples, the manner of their calling, their characters, and even their defects, and failings; in a word, all that is recorded concerning them, is written for our instruction, and is particularly useful to teach us the true meaning of what passes within our own observation.

1. Several things are worthy our notice, in this view, with respect to the choice of his disciples.

1st, They were comparatively very few He was, indeed, usually attended by multitudes in the different places where he preached, because he spoke with a power they had never met with before, and because he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and did good to all. But he had very few constant followers. Those who assembled at Jerusalem after his ascension, are said to have been but about one hundred and twenty (Acts, i. 15.); and when he appointed his disciples a solemn meeting in Galilee, informing them beforehand of the time and place where he would come to them, the number that then met here is expressed by the apostle to have been more than five hundred, 1 Cor. xv. 6.* We can hardly suppose, that any who loved him, and were able to travel, would have been absent upon so interesting an occasion; but how small a company was this, compared with the many thousands among whom he had conversed in all the cities and villages through which he had passed, preaching the gospel, and performing innumerable miracles, for more than three years! Well might the prophet say, foreseeing the small success he would meet with, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" But since he, in whom the fulness of grace resided, had so few disciples, it may lessen our surprise, that his gospel, though in itself the power and wisdom of God, should meet with so cold a reception amongst men, as it has in fact always done.

2dly, Of those few who professed a more entire attachment to his person, a considerable part, after attending him for some time, went back, and walked no more with him. They were but superficially convinced, and rather struck with the power of his words and works, than deeply sensible of their own need of him. When, therefore, upon a certain occasion, he spake of the more inward and experimental part of religion, the life of faith, and the necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, so many were offended at his doctrine, and forsook him (John, vi. 66, 67.),

* The word *brethren* here used does not prove that none but men were present at that time, any more than that, because the apostles, in their public preaching, addressed their hearers as men and brethren, there were therefore no women amongst them, or that the women were not considered as having any interest or concern in the gospel-ministry.

that he said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" which seems to imply, that there were few but these remaining. Therefore, though we see at present that where the sound of the gospel brings multitudes together, many, who for a season appeared in earnest, gradually decline in their profession, and at length wholly return to their former ways, we have the less reason to wonder or be discouraged, remembering that it was thus from the beginning.

3dly, Those who believed in Christ then, were chiefly (as we had occasion to observe before) persons of low condition, and many of them had been formerly vile and obnoxious in their conduct. While the wise and learned rejected him, his more immediate followers were Galileans, fishermen, publicans, and sinners. This was observed, and urged to his reproach and theirs; and the like offence has always attended his gospel. But what enraged his enemies, fills the hearts and mouths of his poor people with praise. They adore his condescension (Luke, i. 52, 53.) in taking notice of the most unworthy, and admire the efficacy of his grace in making those who were once wretched slaves to Satan, a free and willing people in the day of his power.

4thly, But this was not universally the case. Though not many wise, rich, or noble were called, there were some even of these. His grace triumphed over every circumstance of life. Zaccheus was a rich man,* Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews, Joseph an honourable counsellor. We also read of a nobleman or courtier, who believed, with all his house. In every age, likewise, there have been some persons of distinguished eminence for birth, honours, and abilities, who have cheerfully engaged in the profession of a despised gospel, though they have thereby incurred a double share of opposition from the men of the world, especially from those of their own rank. The number of these has been always sufficient to confute those who would insinuate that the gospel is only suited to the taste of the vulgar and ignorant; yet it has always been so small as to make it evident, that the truth is not supported by the wisdom or influence of men, but by the power and providence of God.

5thly, It was farther observable, that several of our Lord's few disciples were under previous connections amongst themselves. Peter and Andrew were brothers (John, i. 40.), as likewise James and John; and these, together with Philip, and perhaps Nathaniel, seem to have been all of one town.† The other James and Jude were also brethren. So it is said, Jesus loved Mary, and her sister, and Lazarus, three in one house, when perhaps the whole place hardly afforded a fourth; and more in a single village than were to be found in many larger cities taken together. This circumstance more strongly marked the discrimination of his grace, in making the means effectual where and to whom he pleased. Such has been the usual event of his gospel since. It is proclaimed to all, but accepted by few; and of these several are often found in one family, while their next door-neighbours account it a burden and offence. It flourishes here and there in a few places (Amos, iv. 7.), while those of the adjacent country are buried in more than Egyptian darkness, and resist the endeavours of those who would invite them to partake of the same benefits. Thus the Lord is pleased to display his own sovereignty, in raising and sending forth his ministers, when and where he sees fit, and in determining the subjects and measure of their success. If others dispute and cavil against this procedure,‡ those who believe have cause to adore his goodness to themselves. And a day is at hand, when every mouth shall be stopped that would contend with the just Judge of all the earth. The impenitent and unbelieving will not then dare to charge him with injustice for dealing with them according to their own counsels and desires, inasmuch as when the light of truth was ready to break upon them, they chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

2. In the calling of our Lord's disciples, and the manner in which they were brought to know and serve him, we may discover the same variety as at this day appears in the conversion of sinners by the preaching of the gospel.

Some. from a religious education, an early

* Zaccheus was a chief or principal publican, to whom the rest were accountable; a commissioner of the public revenue. *And he was rich.* The Greek is more expressive, *And this was a rich man*, Luke, xix. 2, perhaps alluding to what had passed a little before, chap. xviii. 25. This remark is added, to remind us, that what is impossible with men, is easy to him who can speak to the heart, and turn it as he will.

† Compare Mark, i. 16, Luke, v. 10, with John, i. 44, 45. These six, and more than these, were fishermen (John, xxi. 2), and such they continued, only their net-success and capture were so much changed, that it became a new calling: He made them fishers of men. In the fishermen's calling there is required a certain dexterity, much patience, and a readiness to bear hardships. Perhaps many observations they made in their former business were useful to them afterwards. And the Lord still brings up his servants so, that the remembrance of former years (the years of ignorance) becomes a rule and encouragement in future and different scenes of life.

‡ See Rom. xi. 23. There are but few who dispute upon the subject of the divine decrees with that reverence and caution St. Paul expresses. In chap. ix., when an objection was started, he cuts it short with, "But who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" And here he breaks off abruptly, with "O the depth!" &c. He seems to have followed the narrow winding streams of human reasoning, till he finds himself unawares upon the brink of an ocean that has neither bounds nor bottom. And every word expresses the reverence and astonishment with which his mind was filled; the wisdom of the divine councils in their first plan; the knowledge of their extensive consequences in this world, in all worlds, in time, and in eternity; the riches of that wisdom and knowledge; the depth of those riches; his counsels inaccessible, his proceedings untraceable: All is wonderful in St. Paul's view. How different this from the trifling, arrogant spirit of too many upon this topic!

acquaintance with the scriptures, and the secret influence of the Spirit of God upon their hearts, are gradually prepared for the reception of the truth. They read, and strive, and pray; they feel an uneasiness, and a want, which they know not how to remedy; they are sincerely desirous to know and do the will of God; and yet, through misapprehension, and the influence of popular prejudice, they are, for a season, with-held from the means that would relieve them. But at length the preaching of the gospel explains to them the meaning of their former exercises, exactly answers to the state of their minds, and thereby brings its own evidence. Similar to this was the case of Nathaniel. When our Lord referred him to what had passed under the fig-tree, where he had thought himself alone and unobserved, his doubts and scruples vanished in an instant. There is little doubt but Nathaniel had been praying under the fig-tree, and probably desiring a farther knowledge of the prophecies, and their accomplishment in the Messiah. He had heard of Jesus, but could not fully clear up the objections made against him; but now he was convinced and satisfied in a moment.

The attention of some is drawn by what they see and hear around them. They form a favourable opinion of the gospel from the remarkable effects it produces; but their first inquiries are damped by difficulties which they cannot easily get over, and they are ready to say, How can these things be? Their interests and connections in life are a farther hindrance; the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, is a great restraint upon their inquiries; but now and then, when they can venture without being noticed, they seek farther instruction. Now, though this hesitating spirit, which pays so much deference to worldly regards in the search of truth, is highly blameable; yet the Lord, who is rich in mercy, is often pleased to produce a happy and abiding change from such imperfect beginnings. As they increase in knowledge, they gain more courage, and in time arrive to a comfortable experience and open profession of the truth. Thus it was with Nicodemus: he was at first ignorant and fearful; but his interview with Jesus by night, had a good effect. He afterwards ventured to speak more publicly (John vii. 50.) in his favour, though still he did not join himself to the disciples: but the circumstances of Christ's death freed him from all fear, and inspired him to attempt the most obnoxious service, when the apostles themselves were afraid to be seen, John xix. 39.

Others are first prompted to hear the gospel from no higher motive than curiosity; but going as mere spectators, they find themselves retained as parties unawares. The word of God, powerful and penetrating as a two-edged sword, discovers the thoughts and intents of their hearts, presses upon their consciences, and seems addressed to themselves alone. The sentiments they carry away with them are far different from those they brought; and a change in their whole deportment immediately takes place. Such was the case of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 5.): he had heard much of Jesus, and desired to see him; for this end, he ran before, and climbed a tree, from whence he purposed to behold him unobserved. But how great must his surprise and emotion have been, when Jesus, whom he had considered as a stranger, looked up, called him by his name, and invited himself to his house.

Some are drawn by the report of others, freely declaring what the Lord has done for their souls. The relation awakens in them desires after him which are not disappointed; for he is rich enough to satisfy all who seek to him. So the Samaritans, whose expectations were first raised by the woman's declaration, "Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 43.) had soon a more convincing testimony, and could say, "Now we believe, not because of thy word, but we have heard him ourselves; and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

To a few the first impulses of divine grace come suddenly and unthought of, when their hearts and hands are engaged quite another way; as Saul, who was seeking his father's asses, received the unexpected news of a kingdom. A ray of truth pierces their minds like lightning, and disposes them to leave their schemes unfinished, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness only. Thus our Lord passed by the sons of Zebedee when mending their nets (Mark i. 16, 19), and Matthew while busied at the receipt of custom, Mark ii. 14. He only said, *Follow me*; he used no arguments, he proposed no rewards; but he spoke to their hearts, and, by the constraining power of his love, engaged them to a cheerful and immediate obedience.

Afflictions likewise are now, no less than formerly, a happy means to bring many to Jesus. He prepares them for heavenly blessings, by embittering or removing their creature-comforts. Had they continued in prosperity, they would not have thought of him; but the loss of health, or friends, or substance, disappointments in life, or a near prospect of death, constrain them in good earnest to seek for one able to deliver them. In the time of their distress, they say, Arise, and save us; not that afflictions in themselves can produce this turn of thought. Too many, in such circumstances, toss like a wild bull in a net, but when he sends afflictions for this purpose, they accomplish that which he pleases. Thus, when he was upon earth, many who came, or were brought (Mark ii. 9.) to him for the relief of bodily disorders, experienced a double

cure. He healed (John ix. 7, 36, 38.) their diseases, and pardoned their sins. At the same time that he restored the blind to sight (John iv. 53), he opened the eyes of their minds. He sometimes made the afflictions of one the means to bring a whole family to the knowledge of his grace. A considerable part of his followers were such as these, whom he had graciously relieved from distresses incurable by any hand but his. Some had been long and grievously tormented; had assayed every means, but found themselves worse and worse, till they applied to him; and having known the happy effects of his power and compassion, they would leave him no more.

Lastly, We sometimes meet with instances of his mercy and ability to save even to the uttermost, in the unhoped-for conversion of desperate and hardened sinners, who have gone on with a high hand, regardless of mercies, warnings, and judgments, till they seemed past conviction, and given up to a reprobate mind. Their state resembles that of the demoniac, Luke viii. They are so entirely under the power of the devil (though perhaps they vainly boast of freedom), that no arguments, no motives, no resolutions, can restrain them within bounds; but they break through every tie of nature, conscience, and reason, and are restless drudges in the service of sin, though they feel themselves miserable at present, and see inevitable ruin before their eyes. Yet even this case is not too hard for him on whom the sinner's help is laid. He can dispossess the legion with a word; he can take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive, bind the strong one armed, and divide his spoil. Happy change! when the power of grace not only sets the soul at liberty from sin and Satan, but puts it in possession of what were lately the instruments of its slavery! when all the powers and faculties of body and mind are redeemed to the Lord's use, and the experience of past evil is made conducive to future comfort and advantage! Such an instance was that great sinner, that penitent, believing happy soul, of whom it is emphatically remarked, "She loved much, because much had been forgiven her," Luke vii. 47. Sometimes the deliverance is deferred till near the period of life. The poor wretch, labouring under the pangs or dread of death, and trembling at the apprehension of falling into the hands of the living God, is snatched as a brand out of the fire; he receives faith in a suffering Saviour, and feels the power of atoning blood; his terrors cease, and joy succeeds, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus the expiring malefactor was converted upon the cross (Luke xxiii. 43), and received an infallible assurance of salvation.

3. The characters of our Lord's disciples, with the account we have of their defects and failings, may farther illustrate the history of his church and gospel, and afford an apology for the blemishes, which, through human infirmity, do more or less attend the prevalence of his doctrines.

The grace of God has a real influence upon the whole man. It enlightens the understanding, directs the will, purifies the affections, regulates the passions, and corrects the different excesses to which different persons are by constitution or habit inclined, yet it seldom wholly changes the complexion or temper of the animal frame. It does not impart any new natural powers, though it teaches the use and improvement of those we have received. It will dispose us to seek instruction, make us open to conviction, and willing to part with our prejudices, so far and so soon as we discover them, but it will not totally and instantaneously remove them. Hence there are a great variety of characters in the christian life; and the several graces of the Spirit, as zeal, love, meekness, faith, appear with peculiar advantage in different subjects, yet so that every commendable property is subject to its particular inconvenience. Perfection cannot be found in fallen man. The best are sometimes blameable, and the wisest often mistaken. Warm and active tempers, though influenced in the main by the noble ambition of pleasing God in all things, are apt to overshoot themselves, and to discover a resentment and keenness of spirit which cannot be wholly justified. Others of a more fixed and sedate temper, though less subject to this extreme, are prone to its opposite; their gentleness degenerates into indolence, their caution into cowardice. The principle of self, likewise, which, though subdued, is not eradicated, will in some instances appear. Add to this the unknown access and influence which the evil spirits have upon our minds, the sudden and new emergencies which surprise us into action before we have had time to deliberate, with many other considerations of a like nature; and it will be no wonder that some things are always amiss* in the best and most successful attempts to promote the glory of God and the good of souls. And it is farther to be noted that some individuals will be found who, though seemingly engaged in the same good work, and for a time pretending to much zeal, are essentially defective in their hearts and views; and when at length their true characters are exposed, the world, who either cannot, or will not distinguish, charge the faults of a few upon a whole profession, as, in the former case, they wound the character of a good man for unavoidable and involuntary mistakes. We shall therefore

* A lukewarm, cautious spirit can easily avoid, and readily censure the mistakes and faults of those who, fired with an honest warmth for the honour of God and the good of souls, are sometimes transported beyond the bounds of strict prudence. But though the best intention cannot make that right which is wrong in itself, yet the zeal, diligence, and disinterested aim of such persons are worthy of our esteem.

shew, that either the exceptions made, and so loudly reverberated in our ears, against the gospel doctrine, on these accounts, are unjust, or that there was sufficient cause to reject and condemn our Lord and his apostles for the same reasons.

The character of Peter is marked with admirable propriety and consistency by the evangelists. He everywhere appears like himself. Earnestly devoted to his Master's person, and breathing an honest warmth for his service, he was in a manner the eye, the hand, the mouth of the apostles: he was the first to ask, to answer, to propose, and to execute: he made a noble confession, for which our Lord honoured him with a peculiar commendation: he waited but for a command to walk to him upon the water; he was not afraid to expose himself in his Lord's defence, when he was surrounded and apprehended by his enemies: and though, in this last instance, his affection was ill expressed, yet his motive was undoubtedly praise-worthy. His heart flamed with zeal and love, and therefore he was always forward to distinguish himself.

But the warmth of Peter's temper often betrayed him into great difficulties, and shewed that the grace he had received was consistent with many imperfections. Though he sincerely loved Christ, and had forsaken all for him, he was at one time so ignorant of the true design of his incarnation, that he was angry and impatient to hear him speak of his sufferings, and brought upon himself a most severe rebuke. Not content with the ordinary services allotted to him, he offered himself to unnecessary trials, as in the above instance, when he pressed to walk upon the water. The event shewed him his own weakness and insufficiency, yet his self-confidence revived and continued. When our Lord warned him again and again of his approaching fall, he thought, and boldly affirmed that it was impossible. He was sincere in his protestation; but the actual experiment was necessary to convince and humble him. Accordingly, when left to himself, he fell before the first temptation. And here the impetuosity of his temper was still manifest. He did not stop at a simple denial of Jesus, he confirmed it by an oath,* and at length proceeded to utter bitter imprecations against himself, if he so much as knew him, whom he had seen transfigured in glory upon the mount, and prostrate in an agony in the garden. Such was the weakness and inconsistency of this prince of the apostles.

None of these excesses appeared in the conduct of the traitor Judas. He was so circumspect and reserved, that we do not find any of the disciples had the least suspicion of him. But, whilst his heart was full of wickedness, he could find fault with others, and charge their best expressions of love with indiscretion. When Mary anointed our Lord's feet with ointment (John xii. 5, 6), he was displeased at the waste, and professed a warm concern for the poor; but we are told the true reason of his economy: It was not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag which contained the common stock entrusted to him. The charge of the bag is an office full of temptation, and an attachment to the bag has been often at the bottom of many censures and misrepresentations which have been thrown out against the people of God. It has been, and it will be so; but the Lord has appointed that wherever the gospel should be preached, to the end of the world, this action of Mary, with the observation of Judas upon it, and the motive from which he made it, should be handed down together, that we may not be discouraged at things of the same kind. Without doubt, the treason of Judas, and his unhappy end, after having maintained a fair character so long, and shared with the rest in the honours of the apostleship, were to them an occasion of grief, and afforded their enemies a subject of reproach and triumph. But we may believe one reason why our Lord chose Judas, and continued him so long with his disciples, to have been, that we might learn by this awful instance not to be surprised if some, who have made a shew in the church, been chosen to important offices, and furnished with excellent gifts, do in the end prove hypocrites and traitors: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

A desire of pre-eminence and distinction is very unsuitable to the followers of Jesus, who made himself the servant of all; very unbecoming the best of the children of men, who owe their breath to the mercy of God, have nothing that they can call their own, and have been unfaithful in the improvement of every talent. We allow that every appearance of this is a blemish in the christian character, and especially in a christian minister; but if, on some occasions, and in some degree, human infirmity has wrought this way, though no example can justify it, yet those who, through ignorance of their own hearts, are too rigid censurers of others, may be reminded that this evil frequently discovered itself in the apostles. They often disputed who should be the greatest; and, when our Lord was speaking of his approaching sufferings, two of them chose that unseasonable time to preclude the rest, and petitioned that they might have the chief seats in his kingdom. The first offence was theirs; but when the ten heard it, they were all moved with indignation, and shewed themselves equally desirous of superiority. It is plain, therefore, that unless the

* Mark xiv. 71. "He began to curse and swear"—To imprecate the most dreadful curses upon himself, and call solemnly on God to execute them. This was indeed the most probable method to free himself from the suspicion of being a disciple of Jesus, for no such language had been till then heard among his followers.

apostles were hypocrites and mercenaries, some transient escapes of this sort (though confessedly criminal and indecent) are no sure proofs that such a person is not in the main sincere, disinterested, and truly devoted to the service of God and his gospel.

No less contrary to the meek and gracious spirit of Jesus is an angry zeal, expressing itself in terms of ill-will and bitterness to those who oppose or injure us. One of the highest attainments and brightest evidences of true grace, is, from a sense of the love and example of Christ, to shew bowels of mercy and long suffering to all men, and by perseverance in well-doing to overcome evil with good. And a contrary behaviour (if frequent and notorious) will, like a dead fly in precious ointment, destroy the savour, if not the efficacy of all we can attempt for the service of God in the world. However, if repeated falsehoods, and studied provocations do sometimes, in an unguarded moment, extort from the disciples of Christ such expressions and marks of displeasure as in their cooler hours they willingly retract and sincerely repent of before God, this ought not to be exaggerated beyond bounds, as an offence inconsistent with their profession, at least not by any who would be afraid to speak dishonourably of the apostles James and John, who once went so far in their anger[a] as to demand that fire might be sent from heaven to devour their adversaries, Luke ix. 54.

We might proceed to other particulars; but enough has been said to shew the general resemblance which the preaching of the gospel in latter times bears to our Lord's personal ministry: The doctrine is the same, the effects the same. It was, and it is to many, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." The opposition it has met with has been always owing to the same evil principle of pride, and the love of sin, which are latent in every unrenewed heart: Though the pretexts are various, they may be reduced to a few leading motives which are always at work. The professors of this gospel have at no time been very numerous, if compared with those who have rejected it; and of these, too many have dishonoured or forsaken it. Neither have those who have received it most cordially, and been most desirous to adorn and promote it, been wholly exempt from mistakes and imperfections. The tenor of their conduct has proved them partakers of a more excellent spirit than others; their faith in Jesus has not been an empty notion, but fruitful of good works, such as no man could do except God was with him. They have been governed by higher motives, and devoted to nobler aims than the world can either understand or bear; —yet they are deeply conscious of inherent infirmity, and sometimes (to their great grief) they give too visible proofs of it, which their watchful adversaries are glad to aggravate and charge upon them as consequences of their doctrine. This should induce all who love the Lord Jesus to redouble their guard, and to pray with David that they may be led in the right way because of their observers. If the question is concerning the infirmities, or even the vices of others, almost every one is ready to plead in their behalf; allowances are freely and largely made for human frailty, and none are willing to be thought harsh or censorious. But the believer in Jesus must look for no abatement or extenuation; even the professed admirers of candour and charity will not hesitate to put the worst construction upon all he says or does; for they are seeking occasion to wound the gospel through his misconduct. They are sensible that he is generally above them; and therefore rejoice to find or pretend a flaw, on which they may expatiate, to reduce him as near as possible to their own level; though, if their censures are extended to their just consequence, they will (as we have seen) fall hard upon the apostles themselves.

I hope, that what I have said upon this subject will neither be misunderstood nor perverted. We do not defend even the infirmities of the best men; much less would we provide a plea for persecution or ambition. Let not the man, who supposes gain to be godliness, who makes the gospel a ladder whereby to climb the heights of wordly preferment, whose heart, like the insatiable fire, is craving more, and practising every art to accumulate wealth and honour in the church; let not the proud man who would lord it over conscience, and though unable to command fire from heaven, would gladly prepare fire and slaughter upon earth for all who will not venture their souls upon his faith; let not these avail themselves of the examples of James and John: but rather let them tremble at the reflection, that while they manifest no part of the apostles graces, they are entirely possessed of those tempers, the smallest traces of which our Lord so severely rebuked in his disciples.

The first believers, though not faultless, were sincere: The natural disposition of their hearts was changed; they believed in Jesus; they loved him; they devoted themselves to his service; they submitted to his instructions, shared in his reproach, and could not be either enticed or intimidated to leave him. Their

[a] They thought they were influenced by a commendable zeal for their Master, and that their proposal was warranted by an authorised precedent. We do not find that they ever wished for fire to consume the Scribes and Pharisees, who were Christ's most inveterate enemies. But when the Samaritans rejected him, the vile Samaritans whom they, upon a national prejudice, had been accustomed to hate, then their hearts deceived them, and they indulged their own corrupt passions, while they supposed they were animated by a zeal for Christ. Are we not often deceived in the same way? Can we not silently bear, or ingenuously extenuate the faults and mistakes of our own party, while we are all zeal and emotion to expose, censure and condemn what is amiss in others?

gracious Master was their guide and guard, their advocate and counsellor; when they were in want, in danger, in trouble, or in doubt, they applied to him, and found relief; hence they learned by degrees to cast all their care upon him. He corrected every wrong disposition; he pardoned their failings, and enabled them to do better. His precepts taught them true wisdom; and his own example, which, to those who loved him, had the force of a thousand precepts, was at once the model and the motive of their obedience. To make them ashamed of aspiring to be chief, he himself, though Lord of all, conversed among them as a servant, and condescended to wash their feet; to teach them forbearance and gentleness to their opposers, they saw him weep over his bitterest enemies, and heard him pray for his actual murderers.

Thus they gradually advanced in faith, love, and holiness, as the experience of every day disclosed to them some new discovery of the treasures of wisdom, grace, and power, residing in their Lord and Saviour: he explained to them in private the difficulties which occurred in his more public discourses; by his observations on the common occurrences of life he opened to them the mysterious volumes of creation and providence, which none but those whom he vouchsafes to teach can understand aright: he prayed for them, and with them, and taught them to pray for themselves: he revealed unto them the unseen realities of the eternal world, and supported them under the prospect of approaching trials; particularly of his departure from them, by assuring them that he was going on their behalf to prepare them a place in his kingdom, and that in a little time he would return to receive them to himself, that they might dwell with him for ever.

What he personally spoke to them, and acted in their presence, was recorded by his direction, and has been preserved by his providence, for the use and comfort of his church. Though his enemies have raged horribly, they have not been able to suppress the divine volume; and, though invisible to mortal eyes, he is still near to all that seek him; and so supplies the want of his bodily presence by the secret communications of his Spirit, that his people have no reason to complain of any disadvantage: Though they see him not, they believe, love, rejoice, and obey; their attention and dependence are fixed upon him; they intrust him with all their concerns; they rely upon his promises; they behold him as their High-priest, Advocate, and Shepherd; they live upon his fulness, and plead his righteousness; and they find and feel that their reliance is not in vain.

The disciples were content for his sake to bear the scorn and injurious treatment of the world: they expected no better usage, nor desired an higher honour, than to be fellow-sufferers with their Lord. When he proposed returning to Judea, at a time they thought dangerous, and they could not alter his purpose, they did not wish to be left behind: "Let us go (says one of them to the rest), "that we may die with him." It is true, when he was actually apprehended, the first shock of the trial was too strong: they forsook him and fled. He permitted this, both to exempt them from danger, and to let them know that of themselves they could do nothing. But it seems they did not go far. When Thomas afterwards said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," he spoke like one who had been an eye-witness to his sufferings, and expresses an earnestness as if he still saw him wounded and bleeding. This catastrophe indeed almost disconcerted them; they had trusted it was he that should deliver Israel; but they saw him oppressed and slain by wicked men. From that time to his resurrection was a mournful interval, the darkest and most distressing period his church ever knew.

But the third day dispelled their grief: He returned victorious from the grave, proclaiming peace by the blood of the cross; he declared, and his appearance proved it, that the ransom was paid and accepted; and that having now overcome the sharpness of death, he had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Then he spoke peace to their hearts: he opened their understandings to know the scriptures, and breathed upon them his Holy Spirit: he conversed frequently with them during forty days; gave them a large commission to preach his gospel, and an invaluable promise of his presence with them to the end of the world.

When he had thus confirmed them by those instructions and assurances, which his wisdom saw necessary, he was received up to heaven. They followed him with their hearts and eyes a while, and then returned to Jerusalem rejoicing. They were not ashamed of their crucified Lord, or unwilling to bear the contemptuous names of Galileans or Nazarenes for his sake. They were not afraid, as if left like sheep without a shepherd in the midst of their enemies: they knew, that though they could see him no more, his eye would be always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer: they waited, according to his command, for a farther supply of his Spirit, to qualify them for the important and difficult services which were before them. Nor did they wait long; a few days after his ascension, while they were praying with one heart and mind, the place where they were assembled was shaken as with a mighty wind; the Spirit of power and wisdom was abundantly

communicated to them; they spoke with new tongues, and immediately began to preach boldly, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

With this solemn and memorable event, I shall open the second book, and take up the thread of the gospel history from that glorious day of divine power. The contents of this first book, namely, a brief view of the necessity and nature of the gospel-dispensation,—the causes why it is and has been opposed,—and the circumstances of the first believers,—I have premised, as general principles, for my own and the reader's assistance in the progress of the work.

It is much to be wished, that every reader might be impressed with the importance of our subject. It is not a point of curiosity, but of universal concern, and that in the highest and most interesting sense. Most of the researches and disquisitions which employ the time and talents of men, are of a trivial or indifferent nature. We may range on different sides concerning them; we may give or refuse, or retract our assent, when and as often as we please; we may be totally ignorant of them without loss, or be skilled in them all without deriving any solid comfort or advantage from them: but the gospel of Christ is not like the dry uninteresting theories of human wisdom; it will either wound or heal, be a savour of life or of death, a source of endless comfort, or the occasion of aggravated condemnation, to all that hear of it. To receive it, is to receive the earnest and assurance of eternal happiness; to reject it, or remain wilfully ignorant of its characters and properties, will leave the soul oppressed with guilt, and exposed to the wrath of God for ever. It highly concerns us, therefore, to inquire, Whether we believe the gospel or no. whether what we call the gospel is the same that Christ and his apostles taught, and whether it has had the same or similar effects upon our hearts? We live where the gospel is generally professed, and we are reputed christians from our cradles; but the word of God cautions us to take heed, lest we be deceived. We see christianity divided into innumerable sects and parties, each supported by names, arguments, and books, and fighting for the credit of a denomination: but how many forget, that in a little time all these divisions and subdivisions will be reduced to two; the only real and proper distribution by which mankind, as to their religious character, ever was or will be distinguished, and according to which their final states will be speedily decided,—The children of God, and the children of the wicked one.

BOOK II.

OF THE SECOND PERIOD OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I.

OF THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL FROM OUR LORD'S ASCENSION TO THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

THE natural weakness of man is conspicuous in his most important undertakings: having no fund of sufficiency in himself, he is forced to collect all from without; and if the greatness of his preparations are not answerable to the extent of his designs, he has little hopes of success. Farther, when he has planned and provided to the utmost of his power, he is still subject to innumerable contingencies, which he can neither foresee nor prevent; and has often the mortification to see his fairest prospects blasted, and the whole apparatus of his labour and care only contribute to make his disappointment more conspicuous and painful.

The reverse of this is the character of the wonder-working God. To his power every thing is easy: he knows how to employ every creature and contingence, as a means to accomplish his designs; not a seeming difficulty can intervene but by his permission; and he only permits it to illustrate his own wisdom and agency, in making it subservient to his will. Thus, having all hearts and events in his hands, he fulfils his own counsels with the utmost ease and certainty; and to shew that the work is his own, he often proceeds by such methods as vain men account weak and insignificant; producing the most extensive and glorious consequences from small and inconsiderable beginnings. Thus the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all human glory.

This observation might be confirmed by innumerable examples taken from the common history and experience of mankind; but the subject of our present undertaking exhibits the most illustrious proof When the Jews had seen Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, they expected to hear no more of him: his disciples were few, men of no authority, learning, or influence; and since their master, who had made them such large promises, was at last unable to save himself from death, it was probably expected, that his followers would disperse of course, forsake their supposed delusions, and return to their fishing, and other employments suited to their capacities and talents.

They knew not that Jesus had arisen from the dead, and had frequently shewn himself to his servants, to comfort and confirm their hearts. They little thought that he, whom they had seen expire on the cross, was immoveably seated at the right hand of God, possessed of all power in heaven and earth; but his disciples knew this, and therefore continued to assemble in his name. We do not find that there was much notice taken of them till the feast of Pentecost, which was about ten days after his ascension. At this season,* by the Jewish law, the first fruits of the earth were presented at the temple. An appointment, typical of those more sublime first fruits of spiritual gifts and graces with which the Lord on this day enriched his disciples, according to his promise, enabling them to preach his gospel, and make his word effectual to the conversion of a large multitude; as an earnest of that divine power, by which he would support and extend his church and ministry to the end of the world.

When the hearts of God's people are united in love, and pleading his promises in the fervent exercise of faith and prayer, great things may be expected. Such was the happy state of the disciples on this solemn day: they were assembled with one accord; no jars or divi-

* Tiberius, A. D. 33.] In fixing the dates of our history, I shall conform to what I think the most probable and authorised opinion, without perplexing either myself or my readers with the nicetie• of critical chronology.

sions had as yet taken place among them; they were animated with one desire, and praying with one mind. Suddenly and wonderfully they obtained an answer: the place they were in was shaken as by a mighty wind (Acts ii); their hearts were filled with the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit, and they were instantaneously enabled to speak languages which till then they were unacquainted with. These inward powers were accompanied with the visible symbols of fiery tongues, which sat upon each of their heads: a fit emblem both of the new faculties they had received, and of the conquering, assimilating efficacy of the Spirit by whom they spoke; whose operations, like the fire, are vehement, penetrating, transforming, and diffusive; spreading from heart to heart, from place to place, till the flame, which was now confined within a few breasts, was communicated to many nations, people, and languages.

The effects of this divine communication were immediately manifest; they were filled with love, joy, and faith, and began boldly and publicly to praise God. Their emotion and zeal could not be long unnoticed: those who first observed it, spoke of it to others, and a rumour was spread abroad. Jerusalem was at that time the occasional resort of the Jews and Jewish proselytes, who were dispersed throughout the known world, and multitudes had come from different countries to celebrate the feast. The promiscuous throng, who assembled upon the report, and had been accustomed to different languages, were therefore greatly astonished to hear of the wonderful works of God, every man in his own tongue. While some expressed their surprise at this, others ascribed it to the effects of wine, and shewed their scorn and despite to the Spirit of grace, by reviling the apostles as drunkards. Thus they no sooner entered upon their public service, than they began to find the same treatment which their Lord had met with, and were, for his sake, the subjects of calumny and derision. This is a remarkable instance of the sagacity and temper which the men of the world discover in the judgment they form of a work of God; nor is it probable, that our modern reasoners would have judged more favourably, if they could have been present at such a scene, where several persons were speaking loud at the same time, and each in a different language: since they account the operations of the same Spirit, madness, and folly, even where they are not attended with such extraordinary circumstances.

This weak and perverse slander was immediately refuted by the apostle Peter, who addressed the people in a grave and solemn discourse; and, having in few words explained the nature of the fact, and shewn that it was an accomplishment of ancient prophecies, he proceeded to apply himself more closely to their consciences. He assured them that what they saw and heard was wrought by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected before Pilate. He informed them of that honour and glory which he now possessed, and charged them as accomplices in the murder of a person whose character and dignity God had vindicated by raising him from the dead. Though our Saviour had but few disciples during his personal ministry, he had doubtless left a deep impression of his words and works in the hearts of many. This discourse of Peter would naturally recal him to the remembrance of those who had seen him in the flesh, and lead them to reflect how earnestly and unjustly they had, at the instigation of their priests, compelled Pilate to put him to death. These reflections, the closeness of Peter's address, and the power of the Spirit of God, concurred to give them a deep conviction of their sin; they were pierced to the heart, they no longer wondered as curious spectators, but were solicitous for themselves, and cried out, Brethren, what shall we do? Peter then proceeded to open the treasure of gospel-grace, and to direct them to Jesus, whom they had crucified, for salvation. The effect of this day's preaching (for though only Peter is named, it is probable, there were more than one preacher or one discourse) was signally happy. Three thousand souls were converted, and, professing their faith and repentance, were by baptism publicly joined to the church.

A further addition was soon after made: Peter and John having recovered a man from incurable lameness by faith in the name of Jesus, the report of the miracle brought a great concourse of people together a second time, Acts iii. Peter improved the occasion to preach to them at the temple gate, to the purport of his former discourse. He had an attentive auditory, and his word was made effectual to the conversion of many. But by this time the enemies of Jesus were greatly alarmed at the progress of his doctrine (Acts iv. 16, 47.); and having [a] notice of what had passed, the priests and Sadducees violently apprehended Peter, with John, and put them in prison. He had not finished his discourse; but he had said enough to be remembered; and this interruption, with the boldness of his following defence, made his words more regarded. The next day they were brought before the high-priest, rulers, and elders; and being asked concerning the late miracle, Peter, who once had trembled at the voice of

[a] Many consultations have been held, and devices framed, to stop the progress of the gospel, as if it were a dangerous infection. But all such attempts are vain; they may as easily restrain the dawning of the day as suppress the spreading of the gospel. When the Lord is pleased to raise up fit instruments to promote it, and to vouchsafe a season of refreshment from his presence, then its influence cannot be restrained; a spark becomes a flame, a little one a multitude, and opposition only makes the effects more visible and noticed

a girl, was not afraid to use the utmost freedom and plainness with the council and heads of the Jewish nation. He confessed the name and cause of Jesus, reminded them of their wickedness in causing him to be crucified, and in direct answer to their question, assured them that the miracle was wrought in his name, and by his power. Though the council were highly offended with this language, and the more so, as they observed the persons who spoke were private and unlettered men; yet, being unable to deny the fact, for the man who had been lame stood before them, and unwilling to incur the odium of punishing an action they were ashamed to disapprove, they dissembled their rage, and forbidding the apostles to speak any more to the people, they dismissed them; yet they did not depart until they had protested against this inhibition, and declared their resolution to obey God rather than men.

The believers though numerous, amounting to many thousands, lived in harmony and love, as children of one family. The greater part of them were poor; those therefore who had estates, or money, willingly put their all into a common stock for the use of the whole, which was entrusted to the care of the apostles. This is recorded as an instance of the benevolent and disinterested spirit with which the gospel inspired them, but it is not enjoined as a precedent to be universally observed, since we have many proofs, that the usual distinctions in civil life were retained in other churches planted by the apostles; and it soon gave occasion to discover, that in the best societies there may be found some unworthy intruders, and that very specious actions may be performed from base and dishonourable motives. Even under this richest dispensation of grace, there were some professors influenced by no higher motives than hypocrisy and vain glory. Ananias (Acts v.), with his wife Sapphira, attempted to impose on the apostles by a concerted lie, and would have had the praise of giving their whole substance, when their avarice would only permit them to spare a part. As a warning to all pretenders, who seek to join or serve the church from sordid or selfish views, Peter, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, denounced a severe sentence against this unhappy pair, and they both fell dead at his feet.* The cause and suddenness of their death was a vindication of the apostles integrity and authority, and a seasonable admonition to others, to deter any from attempting to associate with the disciples, who were not in heart devoted to the Lord.

The numbers of the believers still increased, and the report of the apostles doctrine and miracles extended from Jerusalem to the adjacent parts. The priests and Sadducees therefore soon renewed their efforts to suppress them: they apprehended the apostles again, and put them in the common prison as malefactors; but the Lord, to confirm the faith and courage of his people, and to shew how easily he can protect those who serve him, delivered them the same night by his angel. In the morning, when their enemies were met, and commanded them to be brought to their tribunal, they were surprised to hear that the prison-doors were found secure, and the prisoners all escaped. They were, however, soon informed that they were not gone far, but were preaching boldly to the people, as the angel had directed them, regardless of their adversaries designs against them. They were alarmed at this notice, and began to be apprehensive of the event *; yet, hurried on by their enmity to Jesus and his gospel, they once more sent their officers to take them, which they attempted in the mildest manner possible; for, as the prosecution was groundless and malicious, they were not without fear lest the multitude should interpose: but they had to do with the followers of Jesus, who would countenance no tumult in their own favour, and were neither afraid nor ashamed to confess his name in the face of danger. The apostles, therefore, peaceably yielded themselves, and being brought before the council, were severely questioned for disregarding the late prohibition they had received. Peter and the rest answered with their usual firmness; they avowed the fact, and their determination to persevere †, and charged them as betrayers and murderers of Jesus in stronger terms than before. The majority of the council were exceedingly enraged at their boldness: they were cut to the heart, and consulted to put them to death. But the more moderate advice of Gamaliel prevailed. He shewed them, from some recent instances, that if this new sect was no more than a human institution, they need not give themselves trouble to suppress it, for it would soon sink and disappear of itself; but if it was indeed of God, their opposition would be not only in vain, but in effect a rebellion against God himself: he therefore recommended milder methods; and having considerable repute among them for his wisdom, the rest assented to him. In this manner the

* The apostolic censures were not like the papal anathemas, *brutæ fulmina*, words without effect; they were accomplished in an instant.—See Acts xiii. 12.

* Acts v. 24. It is not only a fruitless, but a very uneasy undertaking to fight against the truth, and those who profess it. The boldest and wisest champions in this desperate cause are often brought to their wits end, and to foresee their own disappointment.

† Peter and the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." It should seem that this (if any) may be called a natural maxim, and that the rudest savage, or the least child that can be made to understand the terms, must assent to the truth of the proposition, as readily as they perceive that two and two make four: how strange then is it, that men of the greatest parts and penetration in other things so seldom receive it! There are few periods to be found, even in the christian church, in which those who steadily acted upon this principle were not considered as heretics of the worst sort

Lord, who has the hearts of all in his power, delivered the apostles a third time by raising them an advocate from amongst their enemies; yet, to save appearances, and that it might not be thought the council had proceeded so far without good cause, they were not dismissed till they had been scourged, and again enjoined silence. They departed, rejoicing that they had the honour to suffer disgrace for the sake of Christ*, and returned to encourage their companions; continuing still publicly, and from house to house, to teach and preach in the name of Jesus.

These were happy times (Acts vi.), when the whole company of the faithful were of one heart and mind, firmly united in affection, sentiment, ordinance, and practice. Their adversaries, though angry, and desirous to injure them, were powerfully restrained by the Divine Providence; so that they enjoyed peace in the midst of war, and were favoured with much grace in their hearts, and a daily increase in their numbers. Yet it was not long before an occasion arose which might have had unhappy effects, if the wisdom and authority of the apostles had not provided an early remedy. The church, as yet, consisted only of Jewish believers; but these were distinguished into Jews properly so called, that is, natives and inhabitants of Judea, and Hellenists or Grecians, the name given to those of the Jewish race and profession who had been dispersed and settled in the Heathen countries. Many of these, as has been observed, were at that time in Jerusalem, and among the first converts of the gospel. As the multitude who were supplied out of the common stock was very great, it is no wonder if a few individuals were overlooked: some unavoidable instances of this sort gave rise to a complaint, not only of negligence, but partiality, in the distribution of the money; and the Hellenists, or strangers, thought the others had an undue preference shewn them. The apostles, though upright and impartial, were unable to do every thing themselves; and therefore, to prevent such mistakes and suspicions, and that they might devote their whole time and attention to the more important services of the ministry, they entirely divested themselves of the pecuniary charge; and, by their advice seven men were chosen, on whom, by prayer and imposition of hands, they solemnly devolved this trust. Thus the office of deacons was instituted. They were men full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost; and to them the care of the public money, and the support of the poor, was peculiarly confided. Some of them, perhaps all, were occasionally preachers; but this was no part of their office as deacons. By this expedient, the cause of murmuring was taken away, and the peace of the church confirmed.

TIBERIUS, A. D. 34.] Thus the gospel flourished, in defiance of opposition. The Jews, provoked more and more, began to lose all patience; the mild counsels of Gamaliel could no longer restrain them, but their blinded passions hurried them to the last extremities. Stephen, one of the seven deacons newly elected, was the first who received the honour and crown of martyrdom. His zeal for the truth did not begin with his new office, though it is probable his undertaking that charge might place him more in view, and expose him more immediately to persecution. Promotions in the world are attended with worldly advantages; but such promotions in the church as are agreeable to the Spirit of God, will rather entitle a man to a larger share of labours and sufferings, and the painful pre-eminence of standing in the forefront of the battle, to sustain the hottest brunt of every storm. Stephen was no sooner a public person than he became the mark of public opposition. At first they pretended to dispute with him, but when they were unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they had recourse to more effectual methods to silence him; they suborned false witnesses, a main instrument of persecution, against him; and having framed such an accusation as was most likely to alarm the prejudice, and inflame the rage of the people, they brought him before the council, and charged him, that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God. Stephen, though alone, and unsupported in the midst of furious enemies, appeared firm and unmoved as a rock in the midst of the waves: he was not only devoid of fear, but filled with joy (Acts vii.): the testimony of a good conscience, the honour of suffering for his Lord, and a sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, not only preserved his soul in peace, but spread a lustre and glory upon his countenance, so that all who sat in the council, looking upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. In such a disposition, he thought it not worth while to attempt his own defence, but employed the whole time allotted him in behalf of his adversaries, that, if possible, by a distinct view of God's dealing with their nation, and their behaviour towards him, he might engage them to consider their ways, to repent, and believe the gospel. While he spake of the things that had been long since transacted, and kept within the bounds of Moses, David, and Solomon, they had patience to hear him; but when he began to make ap-

* Here were faith and love in exercise: to suffer reproach for Christ was in their esteem an honour and privilege. It is mournful to observe how little of this spirit is to be found amongst us. How soon are we offended and troubled when our names are reproached! how uneasy to lie under contempt! how impatient to justify ourselves, and to be thought well of by all persons! Far from accounting it an honour to be made conformable to Jesus in this respect, we feel it a burden which we are restless to shake off: yet it must be borne, or we must give up profession and all; for neither are our characters more respectable than the first Christians nor is the world better reconciled to the things of God now than it was then.

themselves, with that warmth and [illegible] which the case required, they could [illegible] more: his words cut them to the heart; they no longer preserved the exterior gravity of their stations and characters, but gnashed at him with their teeth, as though they would have devoured him alive.

But vain are the attempts of men to intimidate those whom the Lord is pleased to comfort. He is always near to support his faithful servants, and can manifest himself in a way which the world knows nothing of. Such a seasonable and sufficient discovery he made of himself to Stephen. As he looked steadfastly up to heaven, silently appealing from the injustice of his judges, he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing in glory at the right hand of God, as attending to all that passed, and ready to receive him to himself. Transported with this divine assurance, he was not at leisure to drop a single word to soften his incensed enemies; he endeavoured to communicate the glorious idea with which his soul was filled, and, without regarding the sure consequence of such a declaration, he told them plainly what he saw. This determined their resolves. Hitherto they had been willing to preserve the form at least of a judicial process; but now, renouncing every restraint, and unmindful of their late acknowledgment to Pilate, that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, they stopped their ears to shut out any remonstrance that might be offered, dragged him violently out of the city, and stoned him to death. His dying deportment, which shewed how eminently he was filled with the Spirit of Jesus, whom he saw, is recorded as a fit pattern for the imitation of all who should be called to suffer for the truth in succeeding times. He kneeled down with the sweetest composure, and, having committed his departing soul into his Redeemer's hands, his only remaining concern was for his murderers, and his last breath was a prayer that this sin might not be laid to their charge. Such resolution in the defence of truth, such calmness under sufferings, such tenderness and compassion towards those who oppose, are the surest marks of a high attainment in christianity.

The death of Stephen, far from satiating the rage of the rulers (Acts viii.), rather animated and excited them to new mischief. They observed no farther measures, but gave full vent to their cruelty, and raised a general persecution against the church. A young man named Saul, whom the Lord, from before his birth, had designed for a nobler service, was at this time one of their most zealous and active instruments; he had been a consenting spectator of Stephen's death, and kept the raiment of those that slew him. Encouraged by their example, he soon entered upon action himself, and made havoc of the church, forcibly entering into their houses, and dragging many to prison, both men and women. The disciples, therefore, according to their Lord's direction (Matth. x. 23) gave way to the storm, and dispersed themselves throughout Judea and Samaria, spreading the knowledge of the gospel wherever they went. Thus the methods taken to suppress the truth proved (as they often have since) the means of promoting its progress; yet the Lord, who appoints limits beyond which the fiercest attempts of men cannot pass, preserved the apostles in safety at Jerusalem, where he had farther occasion for their service. Amongst the many who left the city was Philip, another of the deacons: he preached Christ and his gospel in Samaria, performed many cures and miracles among the people, and a great number received faith and were baptized. Here the gospel triumphed over the illusions of Simon, surnamed Magus, or the Sorcerer, who, by his vain arts and arrogant pretensions, had long held the people in subjection and astonishment. But the superior power of truth dispelled the charm; his votaries forsook him; and even the impostor himself was so far convinced, that Philip acted by that divine power and authority to which he had only pretended, that he professed himself a believer likewise, and behaved so fairly, that Philip admitted him to baptism without suspicion; but when, soon after, Peter* and John came to Samaria to communicate the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the new disciples by imposition of hands, Simon discovered his true character: he offered money for a power to impart the same gifts; a proposal which shewed his ignorance, wickedness, and ambition in the strongest light, and proved him an entire stranger to the grace of God. From him the hateful practice of merchandizing in spiritual concerns has derived the name of *Simony*, a crime which, though condemned by the laws of every christian country, as highly injurious and reproachful† to the gospel of Christ, no laws or obligations have hitherto been able to suppress. Peter severely rebuked his hypocrisy, yet exhorted him to repentance and prayer.

* Acts viii. 14. "They sent Peter and John." We find nothing in this book to countenance the pre-eminence which the Papists ascribe to Peter. He and John were deputed by all the apostles, and went upon equal terms. Peter did not send John, nor go himself, without the advice and direction of the rest. John had once desired to call for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans; but he was now better instructed, and gladly went to impart to them the best gifts he could bestow. If the Lord is pleased to make any partakers of the same precious faith with ourselves, though they were once enemies, we should gladly forget all that is past, and receive them as dear brethren and intimate friends.

† In these abuses the church of Rome seems to derive rather from Simon Magus than from Simon Peter; yet it is to be wished such practices were confined to the church of Rome only. Our laws have guarded against them by a very solemn and circumstantial oath; but that this oath, if not literally broken, is often scandalously evaded, we need no other proof than the shameful advertisements which frequently appear in our public papers; not to say, that though there is no money in the case, yet all presentations, exchanges, and advancements that are transacted upon interested views, are so far simoniacal in the sight of him who judges the heart.

His words seemed to have some weight with Simon for the present; but we hear no more of him among the believers: on the contrary, he is recorded in history as an inveterate enemy to the faith and purity of the gospel, and the author of those wild, absurd, and impure heresies which disturbed the first ages of the church.

About this time an eunuch, or great officer of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, who had been worshipping at Jerusalem (which makes it probable that he was a proselyte to the faith of the God of Israel) was returning homeward. Though this nobleman had been at Jerusalem, he had either not heard of the apostles and their new doctrines, or, being influenced by the priests and rulers, had not thought them worthy his notice. He was going home ignorant as he came; but the Lord, who is mindful of his people when they think not of him, appoints the time and the means of bringing them to the knowledge of the truth; and these are often seemingly precarious and contingent, that the work may more clearly be known to be his, and the praise ascribed to his power and providence. Philip, by the direction of an angel, intercepted the Ethiopian upon the road: he found him well employed, reading the prophet Isaiah as he sat in his chariot: he had a very confused idea of the passage he was reading, but he knew it contained an important meaning, and was desirous to discover it. Those who have a just sense of the excellence of the scripture, and peruse it as he did with a sincere intention to be instructed by it, may be encouraged from this instance to persevere, though they find it at present hard to be understood: he who gave them the desire will in due time provide them a teacher, and make dark things plain to them. When Philip drew near, and asked him, without ceremony, if he understood what he read, he was not offended with the abruptness of his address, but courteously invited him to sit with him, confessing his ignorance and the need he had of assistance. The passage which had perplexed him afforded Philip a fair opportunity of preaching Jesus: the eunuch believed, and was baptised in a water they were passing by. In this case there seems to have been no exertion of an outward miracle to confirm the word. Nor was it necessary: the manner of Philip's meeting with him, the suitableness of the question to the dubious state of his mind, and the discovery he obtained, that the prophetical marks of the Messiah exactly coincided with the history of Jesus, afforded him sufficient evidence. The only extraordinary circumstance was the sudden disappearing of Philip, who, having performed his service, was removed by the power of the Spirit to Azotus, a place thirty miles distant; from whence, proceeding along the sea-coast, he preached at Joppa, Lydda, and all the intermediate places, till he came to Cæsarea. In the meantime the eunuch, rejoicing in the Lord's goodness, pursued his journey to Ethiopia. We have no farther account of him in the New Testament; but some ancient writers assure us that he was the means of propagating the faith which he had received, first in his own country, and afterwards in places still more remote.

TIBERIUS, A.D. 35.] The church having suffered much from the violence of the persecution, the Lord was pleased to afford them intermission, and to give a remarkable proof of the power of his grace (Acts ix.), by the conversion of Saul, one of their fiercest opposers. He had been educated a Pharisee, in a zealous attachment to the law, and, from a mistaken principle of conscience, thought it his duty to suppress the followers of Jesus. The warmth of his temper prompted him to uncommon earnestness against them; and as he was a young man, he was probably farther instigated by a desire to ingratiate himself with the Jewish rulers. Not content with the mischief he had done at Jerusalem, he still breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them, and meditated their destruction even in distant places. With this view he obtained letters of authority from the chief priests, and set out for Damascus, that if he found any disciples there, he might bring them bound with him to Jerusalem. Little was he aware of the event of his journey! Little did the believers imagine, that the man who now thirsted for their blood, would soon be their companion and leader! The Lord often permits those to whom he shews mercy, to run great previous lengths in their obstinacy and ignorance: their subsequent change is hereby more noticed, the riches of his grace are more remarkably exemplified for the encouragement of others; and such persons, from a lively sense of their past wickedness, and the undeserved favour they have received, are usually more strongly impressed with a sense of divine love, and more warmly devoted to his service. Some such there have been in every period of the church, and especially whenever there has been a remarkable revival of the power of godliness. When Saul was drawing near to Damascus, perhaps within sight of the city, anticipating his bloody designs, and exulting in thought over the defenceless sheep of Christ, whom he had been taught to consider as schismatics and heretics, who deserved to be extirpated from the face of the earth, he was suddenly surrounded by a glorious light, exceeding the brightness of the mid-day sun, and heard a voice, not of uncertain application, but expostulating with him by name, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" If he was alarmed at the question, he was much more so, when, upon asking, "Who art thou,

Lord?" he was answered, "I am Jesus the Nazarene *, whom thou persecutest." So nearly is the Lord interested in his people, and so dangerous is it to injure them: he accounts their cause, their sufferings, their enemies, his own. The Nazarene was an epithet of contempt affixed to the name of Jesus by those who hated him †; and it is probable that Saul had often spoke of him in these terms; but now he found himself in the Nazarene's power, and unable either to escape or to plead; he fell to the earth trembling and astonished beyond expression; he not only heard his voice, but saw his person (Acts ix. 27. 1 Cor. xv. 9.); an interview which he could not have sustained a moment, if the glory of Jesus had not been tempered with the milder beams of grace and love. The Lord spared him, accepted his feeble surrender of himself, moderated his fears, and dismissed him to Damascus as a willing trophy of his victorious grace, and a singular instance how easily he can subdue the hardest hearts to himself. The brightness of the vision had overpowered his bodily eyes, so that he was led by the hand; but the eyes of his mind were opened; his heart, his aims were changed; he was become a new man, and, instead of threatenings and slaughter, he now breathed prayer and devotion to Jesus, and love to his people. He remained at Damascus three days without sight or food: but the Lord remembered his distress, and sent to him a disciple name Ananias, who, from the character he had heard of him, was at first greatly surprised at the command he received to go to such a person; but the Lord condescended to acquaint him, that Saul was a chosen instrument, whom he had appointed to do and suffer great things for his sake. When Ananias laid his hands on him, a thick film, resembling scales, fell from his eyes; his sight was restored, his mind composed, and he was immediately baptized. Saul had several companions with him in his journey, who saw the dazzling light, heard the sound of the voice which spoke to him, and fell to the ground with surprize as he did; they knew enough of the circumstances of the case to witness for him, that he neither imposed upon others nor himself; but we have no account that any of them were converted, the most extraordinary occurrences being insufficient to change the heart, without the interposition of divine grace.

Thus the late persecuting Saul was numbered with the disciples, and soon distinguished himself amongst them: He now knew by experience the wickedness and danger of opposing the gospel, and was desirous to repair the mischief of his former rage and ill example. A sense of the mercy he had received, and compassion for the souls of others, made him seek every opportunity to persuade and convince the Jews, his former companions and brethren; but he soon found the same treatment from them, which he himself had often offered to the disciples. They opposed and vilified him as an apostate, and at length consulted to kill him: his former zeal in their cause was forgot, or, if remembered, it was an argument suited to inflame their resentment. But no counsel can prevail against those whom the Lord protects. Saul had timely notice of their designs, and because they watched the gates of the city incessantly, he was let down by a basket over the wall *; for though he neither distrusted his cause nor his protector, he was not unmindful to employ prudent means for his preservation. But before this he had made some excursions from Damascus, and visited Arabia; for his own words assure us, that it was not till the third year after his conversion that he returned to Jerusalem. In this interval the Lord, who had appeared to him in the way, by subsequent revelations, fully instructed him in the knowledge of his will, and qualified him for the apostolical office; so that he could afterwards say, that he received neither his authority nor his information from men. When he came to Jerusalem he would have joined himself to the disciples; but they, remembering his former conduct, and not clearly informed of the manner and reality of his change, were at first afraid of him. They had a right to be satisfied of his sincerity. But being soon afterwards introduced by Barnabas, he related to them the means of his conversion, and the occasion of his leaving Damascus. He continued for some time in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, preaching and disputing in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Jews, who hated all the servants of Christ, could not but be particularly enraged at him, who had forsaken their party; against him, therefore, they chiefly set themselves, and making repeated attempts to kill him, he withdrew again from Judea, and went through Syria to Tarsus, in Cilicia, his native place.

CALIGULA, A.D. 38.] Upon his recess the churches in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, had an interval of rest †. The Jews, about this time, were taken up with their own affairs.

* This is the exact import of the Greek, Ιησους ὁ Ναζαρηνος, Acts xxii. 8.

† And for this reason inserted in the title which Pilate put over his cross.

* 2 Cor. xi. 33. "Through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall." The Lord often confounds the pride of his enemies by the manner in which he delivers his servants: he permits violent oppositions, and great preparations, to be made against them, and then disconcerts the combinations of the *many* and the mighty, by feeble and unthought-of means.

† The churches had rest, and walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and were edified and multiplied, Acts ix. 31. Some well-meaning persons seem to forget this passage, when they take it for granted, that the work of God cannot flourish, except there is a violent outward opposition against it. The world will dislike the gospel; but it is possible in some measure to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing; and the Lord can, and often does, favour his people with peace, and put their enemies under restraint.

Caligula, who had lately succeeded Tiberius in the empire, presumed to arrogate divine worship to himself, and commanded altars and temples to be erected to his honour; he was readily obeyed in many places: but when he required his statue to be put up in the temple at Jerusalem, the Jewish nation engaged as one man to prevent it *. They had rejected the Holy One and the true, and the troubles were now beginning to take place, which ended at length in their total ruin and extirpation. Against this first affront and profanation intended to their temple, they united in earnest supplications to Petronius, the governor of Syria, and with much entreaty, obtained permission to send their deputies to the Emperor, who was, though with great difficulty, prevailed on to desist from his purpose as to the temple; but at the same time, he forbade them, under the severest penalties, to oppose the erection or dedication of temples to him, in any place without the city of Jerusalem. This injunction encouraged their enemies to affront their religion wherever they pleased, and laid a foundation for innumerable disturbances and dissensions, in which the Jews, whether aggressors or not, were always the greatest sufferers. While they were thus distracted among themselves, the believers enjoyed a favourable respite, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were edified and increased.

A. D. 39.] As Peter had formerly seconded the labours of Philip, the deacon, at Samaria, he now visited those places where he had preached on his way to Cæsarea, and strengthened the disciples he found there, by his doctrine and miracles. At Lydda† he restored a man to immediate health, who had been many years ill of a dropsy. Being afterwards invited to Joppa, he raised Tabitha, or Dorcas, to life, to the great joy of the poor and the widows, whom she had assisted by her alms and labours. While he made some stay here, his commission was enlarged, and he received direction from the Lord to communicate the gospel to the Gentiles, which had hitherto been restrained to the Jews, except in the case of the eunuch, for which Philip had been authorised by the express command of an angel.

When our Lord sent forth the apostles to preach while he was yet upon earth, he expressly confined their mission to the house of Israel; and though, after his resurrection, he commanded them to disciple all nations, they did not immediately understand the extent of his meaning; though they were under an infallible guidance, they were not fully instructed at once, but received intimations of their duty from time to time, as circumstances varied, and as the designs of divine providence were successively opening. The great Shepherd and Head of the church has an appointed time and manner for the accomplishment of all his purposes; nothing can be effectually done but when and where he pleases: but when his hour is come, then hard things become easy, and crooked things straight; his word, Spirit, and providence, then will all concur to make the path of duty plain to those who serve him, though perhaps, till this knowledge is necessary, he permits them to remain ignorant of what he has designed them for. By this discipline they are taught to depend entirely upon him, and are afterwards more fully assured that he has sent and succeeded them. Peter was not yet freed from the Jewish prejudice, that all intercourse with the Heathens was unlawful; or if he had been so himself, he could not have easily convinced the many thousands of his brethren who laboured under the same mistake. This service was therefore pointed out to him by means which left no room for doubt in his own mind, and enabled him fully to vindicate his conduct to others.

Cornelius (Acts x.), a Roman centurion, or captain, with his family and dependants, were the first fruits of the Gentile converts. He lived at Cæsarea, a city not far from Joppa, and which was the ordinary residence of the Roman governors; and therefore promiscuously inhabited by Gentiles and Jews. It is not probable that he had never heard of Christ, or the new institution that was spreading under his name; but, without doubt, what he knew of it was only from public rumour, in which the misrepresentations of malice, and the surmises of ignorance, usually so far prevail, that persons of the best dispositions are often deterred from making those inquiries which the importance of truth deserves. But the Lord, whom he knew not, had been gradually preparing him for the reception of the gospel; he was already reclaimed from idolatry; he was a devout worshipper of God, exemplary in his family, just in his dealings, and charitable to the poor. How few of those now called christians can equal his character while a stranger to the gospel, we may collect from daily observation; yet those who plead for the sufficiency of what they style natural religion, would do well to observe, that though he was in many respects a good man, and his sincerity was approved by God himself; yet he lacked one thing. But none who are made sincerely desirous to

* Josephus, de Bell. Jud. lib. 2.

† Acts ix. 32. "He came to the saints at Lydda." The scriptures do not use the word *saint* in the narrow and appropriate sense of some, or with that improper extent which others have given to it in after times; it is neither peculiar to apostles and fathers, nor applicable to all who bear it in the Roman calendar, but it is the common appellation of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are saved from sin and condemnation by his grace. There have been saints in all ages, but real saints (while living) have usually been branded with opprobrious names. The world, which knows not Christ, cannot distinguish his people, but will rather give the title of saints to many who have hated and persecuted the gospel.

know the will of God, shall be left finally destitute: he will find a way to give them necessary information. Cornelius, who had often waited upon God by fasting and prayer, and had, doubtless, at times, felt that suspense and anxiety which can only be entirely removed by a clear knowledge of the gospel-covenant, obtained at length an illustrious answer; an angel appeared to him, assured him that his prayer was heard, and directed him to send for Peter, who should inform him more fully of his duty.

It is observable, that though the angel was so minutely exact in his directions, as to mention the street and the very house where Peter resided, he said not a word of the gospel to Cornelius, but referred him wholly to Peter. The wisdom and goodness of God is pleased to make his people instrumental in teaching each other. This not only secures the honour of the success to him alone, but it conduces to their comfort and advantage. An angel could only speak historically, that the thing is so; but it comes nearer to our level when delivered by men who have been in the very case of others, and can say experimentally, that they have found it so. Who so fit to commend the physician's skill and tenderness as those who have been themselves cured by him of a desperate disease? Peter had himself tasted that the Lord was gracious; he had greatly sinned, yet had been freely forgiven; he had seen his excellent glory upon the mount, and had received an express commission from his mouth. In these and other respects, he was a proper person to proclaim him to others, more so than an angel from heaven. We may therefore safely infer, *a fortiori*, that no man, however great his talents may otherwise be, can be qualified or fit to preach the gospel, until he has known the evil of sin himself, and been a partaker of the pardoning grace of God through a crucified Redeemer.

Cornelius was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: his example and instructions had been a blessing to his household, so that he had servants about him to whom he could communicate this extraordinary event, and depend on their fidelity. Having related his vision to them, he sent them to Joppa to invite Peter to his house.

When they departed from Cæsarea, Peter was under the influence of the national prejudice, which would hardly have permitted him to have gone with them; but, while they were on the journey, the Lord prepared his mind to comply. The time was now come,* when it was necessary he should know the extensive designs of God in favour of sinners of all nations, people, and languages; and that the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles was broken down and taken away by the death of Christ. He received this intimation by a vision, which exactly corresponded in its circumstances with the case in hand. About noon the following day, when the messengers were near to Joppa, he was retired to the top of the house, for the convenient exercise of secret prayer; and having an appetite for food, he saw, as it were, a large sheet or wrapper let down from heaven, suspended by the four corners, containing all sorts of beasts, birds, and reptiles, without any regard to the ceremonial distinction of clean and unclean; this appearance was accompanied with a voice directing him, To slay and eat. When he answered, That he had never yet transgressed the law, by eating unclean food; the voice replied, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean. To impress the whole upon his mind, and to convince him that the vision was real and significant, it was repeated three times. When it was finally withdrawn and while he was thinking what it might import,* the men sent by Cornelius were inquiring for him at the door below: of which, receiving previous notice by the secret suggestion of the Spirit of God, and being directed to go with them without hesitation, he went down and spoke to them before they had time to send him word of their arrival by the people of the house. When he had heard their business, and compared the vision of Cornelius with his own, he scrupled no longer; but lodging the strangers that night, he accompanied them the next day, taking with him five of the brethren from Joppa, to be witnesses of what the Lord intended to do. Cornelius, who earnestly expected his arrival, had assembled his friends and dependants against his coming; he received Peter before them all with the greatest respect and cordiality, and gave him a particular account of what had passed, professing that both he and his friends were ready to receive and obey his instructions. Peter now perceived and acknowledged the great truth the Lord had pointed out by so many harmonising circumstances, that the blessings of the gospel were no longer to be confined to the Jews, but that Jesus was appointed to be a light to enlighten the Gentiles also, Acts x. 34.† In his dis-

* In the Lord's dispensations in favour of his people, there is often a counterpart, resembling that which is related in this chapter. The minds of two or more persons are inclined, by different means to concur in the same design, though perhaps they are far asunder, and know nothing of each other's intentions: in time, circumstances fall out which connect their views, and prove that the whole was from the Lord.

* Peter was faithful to the light he had already received, and did not hastily follow the first impulse upon his mind; though the liberty seemed to be authorised by a voice from heaven, he did not accept it without consideration. His example should be considered by those who give themselves up to the influence of every sudden impression, without taking time to consider its nature and tendency, and how far it is consistent with the revealed will of God.

† Few passages of scripture seem to have been more misunderstood and misrepresented than this and the following verse. As some have presumed, that St. Paul's doctrine of justification is corrected if not confuted, by

course to them, he declared the person, character and offices of Jesus, who had been lately crucified, affirming himself to have been an eye-witness of what he related; he asserted his honour and authority as the Lord of all, the sovereign judge of the living and the dead; that he was the divine Saviour spoken of by the prophets, and that all who believed in his name should receive the remission of sin. Here we see the apostle's doctrine to the Gentiles was the same that he had preached at Jerusalem upon and after the day of Pentecost, and the same with what our Lord had declared concerning himself, a free and complete salvation by faith. He did not in the least attempt to accommodate his subject to any supposed prejudices of his new hearers, but faithfully acquitted himself of his message, and left the event to God. The mystery of Christ crucified, which was a stumbling-block to the Jews, was by many of the Gentiles accounted foolishness and absurdity; but the apostles proposed it simply and indifferently to all. In the present case, the success was (what has perhaps seldom happened) universal; the whole company believed, and received the Holy Ghost immediately, previous to baptism, and without the usual imposition of the apostle's hands. This signal attestation, with which the Lord honoured their faith, unanswerably removing every doubt concerning their fitness, Peter immediately directed them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, through whom they had already received that inward and spiritual grace, of which baptism was the outward and visible sign.

When this affair was reported in Judea, it was not at first agreeable to those who knew not the warrant and grounds on which Peter had proceeded; so that when he returned to Jerusalem, he found himself under a necessity of vindicating (Acts xi.) his conduct to the Jewish converts; a full proof that they did not think him infallible, or possessed of that superiority over the whole church which designing men, for promoting their own ends, have since ascribed to him. But though he was an apostle, and had acted by the express command of God, and though their expostulation seems to have been hasty and rough, yet he did not think it beneath him to give an orderly and circumstantial account of the whole business: they, on the other hand, were open to conviction; and, when they had heard his relation, they instantly acquiesced, and glorified God for his grace given to the Gentiles. This mutual condescension and ingenuousness preserved the first christians in peace, though they were not always exempted from mistakes and wrong impressions.

By this time the believers who had been dispersed by persecution had spread the gospel beyond the bounds of Judea and Galilee into Cyprus and Syria, and probably to more distant parts, particularly to Rome, which, being the centre and conflux of the empire, would hardly be long unvisited; however, in all places, the preaching of the word was confined to the Jews till Peter's mission to Cornelius afforded an authorised precedent for imparting it to the Heathens.

A. D. 40.] It was soon after publicly preached in Antioch, the capital of Syria, and no less eminent for luxury and depravity of manners; yet, amongst these dissolute and enslaved people, the gospel of Christ, accompanied with a divine power, was suddenly and remarkably prevalent to turn a great multitude from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The means of this happy change are expressly mentioned: What the philosophers had long attempted in vain, by cold encomiums on the beauty of virtue, was speedily effected by those who simply preached the Lord Jesus as the author, finisher, and fountain of salvation. When the news of this good beginning was brought to Jerusalem, the apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch; who, being a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost himself, was greatly rejoiced when he saw the numbers and sincerity of the converts, and animated them by his exhortations to cleave to the Lord with steady resolution; for he was sensible of what they perhaps were little aware of as yet, how many arts the enemy of souls employs to discourage those who are beginning to walk in Wisdom's ways. He afterwards went to Saul, and prevailed on him to leave Tarsus, and join with him in the service of the gospel at Antioch. By the Lord's blessing on the endeavours of these faithful labourers, the church was so greatly increased, that the believers there first received the general denomination of Christians; a significant and instructive appellation, strongly importing their duty and relation to Christ, and to each other, and has therefore universally obtained, and will probably subsist to the end of time. But though this name be accounted honourable with us, and has always been deemed, by those who truly deserve it, the noblest title, the highest style of man, it had not the same general estimation when first imposed; in the mouth of

St. James; so the apostle Peter has been supposed to contradict both St. Paul and himself (see 1 Pet. i. 1, 2), in another important truth of the gospel. This mistake is more excuseable in those who do not understand the original; but those who do, ought not to avail themselves of an ambiguous word. The Greek προσωπολήπτης, from whence προσωπολημψια is derived, does not convey the same idea that an English reader receives from the word *person*; it does not properly signify a personal identity, but the outward appearance and circumstance of a person or thing. Thus it is sometimes rendered *face*, as Matth. vi. 17. and many other places; and is applied to the sky or air, Matth. xvi. 3.; *countenance*, Luke ix. 29.; *presence*, 2 Cor. x. 1.; *fashion*, James i. 11. The meaning here is the same as in Coloss. iii. 25. The Lord is not moved by the outward distinctions and differences amongst men, to which we often pay regard: compare 1 Sam. xvi. 7. He neither receives or rejects any for being Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, but is rich in mercy to all who call upon him.

unbelievers, whether Jews or Heathens, it was a term of infamy and reproach, and expressive of the highest contempt,* and may be therefore ranked among the many opprobrious epithets by which the Lord's faithful followers have been marked out to the rage and scorn of the world.

Caligula having rendered himself universally odious by his inhumanity and caprice, was assassinated in his palace, in the fourth year of his reign.†

CLAUDIUS, A. D. 41.] He was succeeded by Claudius, who, soon after his entrance on the government, bestowed the kingdom of Judea on Herod Agrippa, a grandson of Herod, styled the Great (mentioned Matth. ii.), and nephew to Herod the Tetrarch, who put John the Baptist to death. This prince experienced much of that vicissitude which usually attends ambition: he had been detained in prison and chains by Tiberius, greatly favoured and advanced by Caligula, and now seemed to have attained the summit of his wishes; but, employing his power to persecute the church (Acts xii.) he was suddenly cut off in the height of his prosperity; for who can harden himself against the Lord and prosper? Herod was a professed zealot for the law of Moses and the Jewish institutions, and studied by every means to ingratiate himself with the people. He first expended vast sums in the defence and ornament of the city; but it was in his power to attempt a still more acceptable service, by exerting his authority against the people of Christ; and the motives of vanity and popularity, by which he was governed, prompted him to embrace the occasion. He began by apprehending the apostle James, the son of Zebedee, whom he hastily put to death; and, finding that the Jews were highly pleased with this step, he proceeded to imprison Peter, intending to delay his execution till after the Passover [A. D. 44], that his zeal against these innovators might be applauded by a greater number of spectators. This stroke, though very afflictive to the church, was wisely permitted, to illustrate the courage and fidelity of the apostles: it shewed that their miraculous powers, and high office, afforded them no sure exemption from persecution, but that they ventured and acted upon the same principles of faith and love to Jesus, in common with other believers. Thus James finished his course, and received the crown the first of the apostles. But Peter, being designed for farther services, was still safe, though to an eye of sense he seemed marked out for a speedy sacrifice: incessant prayer was made on his behalf by the disciples and the united prayers of God's people have an efficacy which can be withstood by no human power: when he inclines them to join with earnestness and perseverance in prayer, it is because he has already determined to grant their petition. In this case the answer was signal, though not immediate. The night before Peter was to have been brought forth to suffer, he was sleeping between his keepers with that serenity which is peculiar to those who have a good cause, a good conscience, and a steady faith in God. Neither the inconveniences of a prison, nor the expectation of death, could discompose him, for he knew in whom he had believed; but he was awakened by an angel, who freed him from his chains, opened the prison-doors, and brought him into the street, unperceived by the guards. After the angel had thus set him at liberty, and was departed Peter went to the house where his friends were at that instant praying for his deliverance. Thus they had a remarkable proof, that the Lord is indeed a God that heareth prayer; and it is recorded for our encouragement.

In the morning, Herod found himself disappointed of his prey. The guards, upon examination,* being unable to give an account of their prisoner, he commanded them to be put to death. It is probable that Herod, or his advisers, might suspect a miraculous interposition (as the apostles had been delivered the same way a few years before): but to punish the keepers, as if they had been guilty of conniving at his escape, was the most likely method to stop farther inquiry, and prevent the people from supposing any thing extraordinary in the affair.

Herod did not long survive this event. He lived and died a monument of the instability of human greatness. He was much devoted to his Roman masters, and had a taste for their magnificence. This induced him to celebrate games and shows at Cæsarea, in honour of the emperor: here he laboured to display the utmost of his grandeur. His pride was farther flattered by the arrival of an embassy from Tyre and Sidon. These cities had incurred his displeasure; but as they chiefly drew their subsistence from his dominions, they were compelled to supplicate peace, which, though they had highly offended him, they obtained by their interest with Blastus his chamberlain. The king appointed a day to receive their submission, when he appeared with a splendour that dazzled the eyes of the spectators: he addressed himself to the ambassadors in a pompous oration, suited, we may suppose, to give them the highest idea both of his power and his clemency. When he had ended, he heard his praises resound from every quarter: the multitude shouted,

* ——Quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat: auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. *Tacitus, Ann.* 15.

† Josephus, Ant. lib. x.

* Herod examined them himself. It is probable he found strong reason to think Peter had been miraculously delivered; but, like a wise politician, he dissembled his conviction, and, to stifle all suspicion, wreaked his resentment upon the soldiers. They, without doubt, believed there was something extraordinary in the case, and might have said so if they had lived;—but dead men tell no tales.

It is the voice of a God, not of a man. His vain heart was elated with this impious compliment, which indeed was no more than had often been used upon such occasions among the Heathens; but when it was now adopted by those who professed a knowledge of the true God, the proud worm, who durst be pleased with it, was made a sudden and awful example of the divine displeasure: the avenging angel of the Lord smote him with an irresistible, though invisible stroke; and, while surrounded with the fancied insignia of majesty, and in the midst of their idolatrous acclamations, he found and confessed himself a mortal. He was seized with excruciating pains, and expired in a few days, being in a manner devoured by vermin bred from his bowels. With his death the persecution ceased. He perished, and was quickly forgot; but the word of God, which he had attempted to suppress, grew and multiplied as before.

The church of Antioch during this time greatly increased, and enjoyed the benefit of many excellent teachers, some of whom were endued with a prophetical spirit, by which the Lord intimated his will to them in particular cases. In this way they had been informed of an approaching dearth, and, as seasons of scarcity would severely affect the disciples in Judea, who laboured under peculiar difficulties, they cheerfully contributed to their relief, and sent the collection to Jerusalem by Saul and Barnabas, who, having fulfilled their commission, returned to Antioch about this time. [A. D. 45.] These two were soon afterwards (Acts xiii.) appointed by an express revelation to propagate the knowledge of the gospel in other countries: they were set apart to this service by the solemn prayers of the church, and attended by John, surnamed Mark, who had accompanied them from Jerusalem. Thus they went forth, like Abraham, uncertain whither they were to go, but assured of an infallible guidance and power to direct and prepare the way.

It is generally believed that, nearly about the same time, the apostles at Jerusalem likewise separated, to preach the gospel in the districts respectively allotted them by the direction of the Holy Spirit; and we have some account from antiquity of their several provinces, according to which they divided among them the greatest part of the known world, from India to Barbary, and from Abyssinia to Scythia. Indeed there is no doubt but they executed their commission as apostles, and spread the gospel far and wide; but the particulars recorded of their labours, sufferings, and circuits are not transmitted with such authenticity and clearness as to give entire satisfaction. The only certain history we have of the apostolic age is that of Luke, which we call the Acts of the Apostles; and this, from the period we are now come to, is confined to those events in which Paul was personally concerned, and does not even carry on his history to the end of his life. The wisdom of God having given us, both in the life of Jesus and of his first servants, rather a specimen sufficient for our instruction than a complete history to gratify our curiosity, to this plan we shall conform; and, while we have the light of an inspired writer, we shall not wander after the glimmerings of tradition. I shall therefore, in the progress of this chapter, confine myself to the Evangelist's narration, so far as it goes, and, when he leaves us, it will be sufficient to comprise, in a very narrow compass, the most certain or most probable incidents which we can recover to complete the records of the first century.

Saul and Barnabas embarked at Seleucia, a sea-port in the neighbourhood of Antioch, and sailed to Cyprus: they landed at Salamis, on the east side, and proceeded through the island to Paphos, in the west, making the first tender of the gospel in every place to the Jews. At Paphos the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, was desirous to hear the apostles doctrine: he was attended by Elymas, a pretended magician and prophet, who fearing the discovery of his impostures, laboured to divert the governor from his purpose, and to prejudice him against them. But Saul sharply rebuked his wickedness, and, by the impulse of the Holy Spirit,* denounced a sentence against him, suitable to his crime; he who endeavoured to detain others in darkness and ignorance, was suddenly struck blind himself. This punishment, which he could neither foresee nor avoid, discovered the vanity of his claims, and convinced the governor, that the preachers spoke by an authority superior to their own; he therefore attended more carefully to their words, and became soon a partaker of their faith.

From Cyprus they sailed to Perga, in Pamphylia; where their attendant Mark, either already wearied with fatigue, or apprehensive of greater difficulties, or from a fickleness and levity of temper, would proceed no farther with them, but returned to Jerusalem. By this indiscretion he not only lost many valuable opportunities, which he afterwards regretted, but in the end gave occasion to a great difference between Barnabas and Paul. Such is the state of humanity, that those persons in a society who cannot do much good, are often, by their imprudence, the cause of much harm, even where they intend other-

* It is expressly said, that Saul or Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost, therefore the severe expressions in his reprimand were not the effects of intemperate anger, but a solemn declaration of the sorcerer's true character: yet it is safer to imitate the apostle in his patience and humility, than in this singular instance. The power of God, which accompanied his words, proved by what impulse and authority he spoke. We, who are not apostles, and who make no claim to apostolic power, shall act more in character to conform to the general rule St. Paul has given us, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25

wise. From Perga they proceeded to Antioch, in Pisidia, and entered into the synagogue. [A. D. 46.] Their habit and manners bespoke them Jews, but, perhaps the rulers of the synagogue were not apprised of their character. When the ordinary service was finished, they were desired to propound their sentiments. Paul, who was usually the speaker, addressed them in a long discourse, a valuable abstract of which is preserved to us. In his introduction, he reminded them of their ancient history and prophecies; but the sum and substance of his sermon was Jesus. He proved from the scripture that he was the Messiah, in whom the promises centred, and proposed him to all as the great object of faith, through whom, and by whom alone, forgiveness of sin was to be obtained, and a free justification from those offences for which the law of Moses had made no provision. In the close, he solemnly warned them of the danger of rejecting this Saviour and his gospel. His discourse made no great impression upon the Jews; but some of the Heathens, who had been occasionally present, desired to hear the matter farther explained. Accordingly, on the next Sabbath, almost the whole city was collected to hear the gospel, which exceedingly offended the Jews, and prompted them to interpose with cavil and abuse. The apostles then told them, in plain terms, that though their message was first to them, yet, since they refused to receive it, they would henceforth freely proclaim it to the Heathens, from whom they expected a more favourable hearing; nor were they disappointed in their hope, for many of the latter received the word with joy, both in the city and adjacent country.* The Jews, farther exasperated by this success, so wrought upon the passions and prejudices of some persons of influence, both men and women, who were probably proselytes, and superstitiously devoted to their new profession, that Paul and Barnabas were violently compelled to depart; but they left behind them disciples, the fruits of their ministry, who were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, and thereby enabled to maintain the faith, though their teachers were forced from them.

The apostles, shaking off the dust of their feet (as our Lord had commanded), for a testimony against the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, went from thence to Iconium, the chief city of Lycaonia, where they made many converts, both Jews and Gentiles. But the Jews who believed not, actuated by the same spirit in every place, opposed them earnestly *; yet they staid so long, and met with such success, that the city was divided, a part holding with them, and a part influenced by their enemies, who from thence took occasion to represent them to the magistrates as disturbers of the public peace; a charge which has often been falsely urged against the ministers of the gospel. At length their adversaries prevailed, and violent measures were resolved on; but they, having notice of it, withdrew in time to Lystra, in the same province, where they pursued their ministry with their usual zeal and firmness, without being deterred by the opposition they had already met with, or were likely to meet in every place. Among their hearers at Lystra, there was one who had been a cripple from his birth. Paul, observing his attention, and some indications of faith in his behaviour, was directed to confirm the doctrine of Jesus by a signal miracle. He commanded the lame man to stand upright upon his feet; and his word was accompanied with immediate power: the man, who had never walked, instantly sprang up, and possessed the perfect use of his limbs. It appeared, from this instance, that though miracles have a tendency to rouse the attention, and are a proof of a power beyond the ordinary course of things, yet they cannot, of themselves, inform or convince the mind of truth: for the ignorant multitude, though greatly struck with what they saw, were so far from believing the apostles doctrine, on the evidence of this miracle, that they endeavoured to account for it on their own idolatrous principles: they forgot all they had heard of Jesus, and cried out, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. Agreeable to their blinded notions, they called Barnabas, *Jupiter* and Paul, *Mercury*, imagining something in them peculiarly characteristic of those fabulous deities. In the warmth of their superstition, they assembled with their high priest and victims †, and would have offered sacrifices to the men who came to turn them from dumb idols to serve the living God. But nothing gives the faithful ministers of Christ greater pain, than to have any part of that honour or dependence addressed to themselves, which they are desirous wholly to engage for their Lord and Master. Paul and Barnabas, who

* When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy. Among the clamours raised against persons and doctrines in our own time, some have not been ashamed to allege the great concourse of people usually attending, as a sufficient objection, forgetting (as it should seem), that this was one circumstance that provoked and instigated the enemies of Christianity from the beginning, John, vii 40, 48, and xi 48, and xii. 9

* Acts xiv. 2. "The Jews stirred up the people." There is a natural enmity in the hearts of some men, but in many it is dormant; they are engaged in business and pleasure, and would be content to let the people of God alone, as unworthy their notice; these must be stirred up by the more zealous to join in the common cause: and accordingly no pains of misrepresentations are spared to rouse them from their indolence.

† The high priest was probably willing to avail himself of the superstition of the people, and thought it a favourable occasion to establish the belief of a peculiar sanctity and virtue in the temple at Lystra, which might increase the number of votaries and promote his own wealth and influence, just as a legendary report of the appearance or miracles of some saint, or angel, has been improved to procure a veneration for particular cities or temples in Christian countries.

had suffered persecution and ill-treatment with patience, were transported beyond their usual bounds at these marks of ignorant applause; they rushed in among the people, confessed their own infirmities, boldly reproved their blind idolatry, and directed them where alone their thanks and worship were due; yet, with all they could say, they hardly prevailed on them to desist. It was happy for them that they sought not their own glory, and could not be elated with the applause of men. Poor and precarious is the reward of those who aim no higher than this; for, as the tide, after running a while violently one way, soon afterwards by degrees reverts to the contrary extreme, so inconstant is the praise and regard of the unthinking many, who are governed by appearances, and susceptive of every new impression. Some of the restless Jews followed the apostles from Iconium, and, by their insinuations, prevailed on the same people to treat those as malefactors, whom a little before they had revered as deities: they tumultuously assaulted Paul (who, being the chief speaker, was usually the chief sufferer), stoned him, and dragged him out of the city, supposing they had killed him; but the Lord, to whom the issues of life and death belong, restored him, and healed his bruises, so that he rose up while the disciples were sorrowfully standing round him; and having entered into the city, to shew that he was neither dead nor intimidated, he was enabled to accompany Barnabas the next day to Derbe.

Here they continued some time, and taught many; and this was the boundary of their present progress. From hence they returned regardless of their enemies, to the places they had been at before, to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Perga, confirming the believers, forming them into societies, and constituting elders and pastors, from amongst themselves, in every church. In all places they took care to instruct the believers in the nature of their profession, and reminded them of an unalterable necessity in the present constitution of things, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God *, Acts xiv. 22. After this, recommending the new converts to the grace and care of the Lord, in whom they had believed, they again took shipping, and returned to Antioch in Syria. Upon their arrival, they assembled the whole church, and gave them a particular account of all that the Lord had done for them, and by them, in their late circuit. [A. D. 47.] This is the news which believers delight to relate and hear: the traverses of policy, or the events of war, the usual topics of conversation, afford them but little entertainment; but it rejoices their hearts to be informed of new accessions to the Redeemer's kingdom, and to see how his wisdom and grace triumph over all opposition.

Hitherto the church had only to struggle with outward difficulties; but as human nature is always the same, and the apostolical times were to transmit instruction to the people of God in every succeeding period, mistakes, disputes, and divisions were, by degrees permitted to take place among professed believers. If it had not been so, we might not only have been discouraged by the great disparity between the first christians, and those who have lived since, but, for want of rules and precedents of sufficient authority, we should have been continually at a loss how to oppose and confute the various errors which have appeared and been revived during so many centuries: the Divine Wisdom therefore thought fit to suffer every false and dangerous notion, whereby the enemy of souls would at any time attempt to corrupt the simplicity of the faith, to make its first entrance while the apostles were yet living, that we might have their instructions and examples to guide us in every emergency. However paradoxical it may seem, we hope, in a proper place, to shew, that no new opinion, either right or wrong, respecting the faith in Christ, has been started since the close of the scriptural canon. As the gospel, that good and perfect gift, came down from the Father of lights complete, and has received no amendment from the hands through which it has successively passed,—so, on the other hand, the grand deceiver exerted all his force against it, and availed himself of all his influence on the ignorance and wickedness of men from the very beginning, and has no subtle devices in reserve now, having tried his utmost resources over and over. It is true, length of time, and change of circumstances, have afforded him opportunities of placing his delusions in various lights, and have given some of his schemes a seeming strength and establishment which they had not at first, but as a man attained to his full stature and vigour, is the same individual person that was once an infant, unable to stand alone, so there neither is, nor has been, any erroneous principle, however authorised or recommended, or perhaps applauded as a new discovery, by those who are ignorant of scripture and an

* That this was the case in the primitive times is generally allowed; but we have been told by some, that things are now greatly altered in this respect: they would persuade us, that our Lord's words (Matth. vii. 13.) are no longer in force; that the way to the kingdom, in our happy days, is broad, spacious, smooth, and thronged by multitudes, the very characters he has given us of the road to destruction. Such teachers and writers are little aware how they proclaim their own ignorance. If they knew the spirit of enmity which the world bears to true christianity,—the trials with which the Lord visits his people, to prove and exercise their faith,—the assaults and temptations they endure from the powers of darkness,—the griefs they feel from a sense of their own unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness,—the fightings without, and fears within, which are more or less experienced in the christian life—if they knew these things, they would speak otherwise. The beaten way to honours and preferments is, perhaps, free from these tribulations; but not so the way that will lead to the kingdom of God.

tiquity, but we can, from express passages in the apostles writings, shew that the same existed in their time, though in a more feeble and infantile state. This point we are to illustrate more at large hereafter; at present I am only concerned to take notice of a dissention that arose among the believers at Antioch, not long after the return of Saul and Barnabas, which made their presence there particularly useful. This was occasioned by some Judaising professors, who came down from Judea, and taught the Gentile converts, that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. This dangerous position, arising from a misapprehension of the righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, and tending to substitute a quicksand for the foundation of hope, instead of the immoveable rock which God has laid in Zion, was warmly opposed by these apostles of the Gentiles; they had a double conviction of its falsehood, both from the nature of the faith they had received themselves, and the effects of the gospel they had imparted to others; but many weaker minds, having less experience of the work of grace in their own hearts, and less acquaintance with what the Lord had wrought in others, were staggered. When therefore, after many debates, the point was not settled to satisfaction, it was resolved to depute Paul and Barnabas to consult the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. [A. D. 49.] If this, as seems probable was the journey St. Paul refers to in Gal. ii., they were directed to take this step by the Spirit of God, since he there says, that he went up to Jerusalem by, or in consequence of, a revelation. They were accompanied by some brethren; and in every place where they found believers, they comforted them with the account of their late progress. At Jerusalem they were cordially received; and having declared the happy fruits of their preaching to the Heathens, though they had not attempted to bind them to the Mosaic law, they proceeded to declare the tenet which had been lately advanced, and their motives for opposing it. They soon found persons of the same legal spirit, who justified and repeated the obligation of the ceremonial law upon all who embraced the gospel. Upon this, a particular day was named for the whole assembly to meet, and discuss the question. In this convention there was the highest room to expect, that the Spirit of God would influence their resolves, and guard them from giving their sanction to an error; and he did so; yet not by an audible voice or instantaneous impulse, but by presiding over their debates, and enabling them, in the conclusion, to collect and pronounce the true state of the question with infallible evidence and certainty. Here again it is plain, that Peter little thought himself entitled to that supreme prerogative, as the immediate vicar of Jesus Christ, which his pretended successors falsely ascribe to him. nor did his brethren remind him of his privilege, otherwise there could have been no debate, for his declaration would have been decisive; but waving the claim of authority, he argued the insignificance of the Jewish rites as to salvation, from the Lord's conduct towards Cornelius and his friends, by his ministry. These were the first Gentile converts; and in this instance, he said, the Lord had fully declared his mind, making no difference between Jew and Gentile, purifying their hearts by faith in his blood, and imparting to them those substantial blessings, of which the ceremonial law exhibited no more than the shadow; and which, in comparison of the liberty of the gospel, he termed *an unnecessary yoke, too heavy to be borne*. The assembly then kept silence, while Paul and Barnabas related more at large the fruits of their late mission among the Heathens. The conference was closed, and the determination given, not by Peter, but by James, who asserted the Gentiles freedom from the Jewish yoke, and enjoined them only to abstain from fornication, from things offered to idols, and from blood. The two latter points were necessary to preserve a friendly intercourse between the Gentile and Jewish converts, so long as these were indulged in observing the Levitical institutions; and the prohibition from fornication, though immediately belonging to the moral law, which was of universal obligation, was added to give the Gentiles a deeper sense of the guilt and evil of a practice, which the most civilized and virtuous Heathens considered as almost, if not wholly, innocent.

This sentence was generally embraced; and a letter to the same effect was written to the believers at Antioch, confirming them in their christian liberty. In this they thought it a sufficient condemnation of the opposite opinion to say, They had given no such commandment: a protestation the apostles might have often repeated had they lived to this day: but since their genuine writings still subsist, we may, by parity of reason, still infer, that we need not be afraid of rejecting any thing that is enjoined as binding upon the conscience, if we can be sure that the apostles, who were divinely inspired to explain the christian faith and practice, have given us no precept in its favour. They likewise took care to assert their firm persuasion, that their decision was agreeable to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. This convocation has generally been styled the first christian council; but indeed, when we compare it with those which bore the same name afterwards, and were professedly formed upon this precedent, we shall be almost tempted to say, that it was not only the first, but the last. Here were no intrigues practised, no temporal interests consulted, no fierce and bloody anathemas issued, to give a sanction to persecution, no uncertainty or

animosity in the issue; but the affair was conducted with freedom and moderation, and the conclusion made by general consent, and to the satisfaction of both parties. How different in these respects from the spirit of after times! But though this answered the end in the present case, the judgment of the apostles was not entirely obeyed, even while they lived. This debate was revived in other places, and proved a frequent impediment to the peace of the church, so long at least as the temple and worship of Jerusalem continued, and gave St. Paul occasion to write his epistle to the Galatians expressly on this subject; nay, it seems the mistake still subsisted in Judea, though none publicly ventured to contradict the decree when it was made; for when, some time after, Peter went to Antioch, and conversed (Gal. ii. 11) freely with the Gentile converts, living after their manner for a season, yet, when some brethren came down from Jerusalem, he was so fearful to offend them in this matter, that he separated himself again, and, by his influence, prevailed on Barnabas likewise to dissemble in favour of those of the circumcision. For this weak compliance, whereby he seemed to overthrow what he had before established, St. Paul withstood him to his face: he did not detract from his character by insinuations to his prejudice behind his back, nor did he content himself with reproving him in secret; but as the offence was public, tending to confirm the Jews in their bigotry, and to offend the weak on both sides, he boldly and publicly rebuked him before them all. Strange weakness, incident to the best of men! that Peter, who had first laid aside his prejudices, who had visited the Gentiles by divine direction, had seen the happy effects of his compliance, and vindicated his own conduct so unanswerably upon a late occasion, should now shrink and trifle, expose himself, and grieve his brethren, through fear of those who came from Jerusalem! To be delivered from the fear of man is a deliverance indeed! It was happy for Peter that he had, in his brother Paul, a faithful friend, who, by a few well-timed words, broke the chain, and set him at liberty. It is surprising that any who have read this passage should dream of fixing on Peter, above any other of the apostles, to be the supreme and infallible head of the christian church.

Justus and Silas, two of the brethren, were sent with Barnabas and Paul to accompany the letter, and to declare the purport of it more at large. They were gladly received at Antioch, and not only confirmed the peace of the church, but were further helpful to their faith, by the singular gifts with which the Lord had honoured them. In a little time Justus returned to Jerusalem, but Silas chose to continue longer, and was afterwards the constant companion of St. Paul in his travels.

A. D. 50.] This obstacle being removed, the gospel flourished greatly at Antioch. But, amidst all their services and success there, Paul and Barnabas could not forget the converts they had left in Cyprus and Asia Minor. They proposed therefore to make them a second visit, to comfort them, and to see how the work had prospered in their absence: but a difficulty was started concerning John, surnamed Mark, who had formerly left them at Perga; and having probably repented of his irresolution, was now desirous to proceed with them again. Paul warmly opposed this, thinking him highly culpable for his inconstancy, and perhaps too much influenced against him by a spirit of resentment not wholly excuseable. On the other hand, Barnabas undertook his apology; in which, besides his tenderness to his fault, he seems to have been moved by considerations which ought to have no place where the service of God is concerned. John was his sister's son; and this led him to consider his conduct in the most favourable light. Thus they were both a little partial in the cause; but much more wrong in the issue; for the contention became so sharp between them, that it broke their harmony. They determined to part. Accordingly, Barnabas took Mark, whose company he had dearly purchased by the loss of Paul's, and sailed to Cyprus, his native place; and Paul, chusing Silas in his room, went through Syria and Cilicia, being recommended to the Lord by the prayers of the brethren. So that their former work was now divided between them.

I must venture to digress here a little for the sake of two remarks, of which the course of our history may often remind the reader. 1. How small an occasion will discover human infirmity even in the brightest characters! Not all the graces of Paul and Barnabas, nor the remembrance of the services and difficulties they had jointly experienced, nor the importance of the common cause in which they were engaged, nor the fear of giving offence to the world and to the church, could restrain these dear friends, fellow-labourers, and fellow-sufferers, from contending and separating about a trifle. 2. How wise is the over-ruling providence of God, permitting such things for the trial of some, the instruction of others, and the better carrying on his own designs! In succeeding revivals of religion, the like differences* have sometimes taken place among the main instruments, and from as trivial causes; and though they have not obtained without fault in some, and inconvenience to many; yet the event has proved them no hindrance upon the whole. The work

* To mention only one by anticipation,—the unhappy dispute between Luther and Zuinglius, and their respective followers, concerning the words, "This is my body." The difference between them was little more than imaginary; but the mischiefs it occasioned were real, important, and numerous, and would probably have stifled the Reformation in its birth, if it had not been so remarkably under an almighty protection.

has become more diffusive, and more incontestible, when persons of different tempers, sentiments, and talents, who seemed to superficial observers as the heads of different parties, have laboured with equal zeal and success in advancing the one great design of the gospel. As a skilful gardener raises many plants in a little spot of ground, and removes them afterwards to places where they will have more room to grow and flourish; so they who are designed for extensive usefulness, are often first reared within a little compass, within the sight and knowledge of each other, where they are sheltered and strengthened, while tender, by their mutual advices, prayers and examples, and seem to have only one heart and one mind. But were they always to continue thus closely connected, no one would have room to expand according to the measure of gifts and services which the Lord has appointed them; therefore they are thinned and transplanted: either persecutions from without, or weaknesses, mistakes, or jealousies among themselves, scatter them afar, to places and undertakings they had no thoughts of, and which would not have been otherwise attempted.

The apostle Paul, with his companion Silas (Acts xvi.), proceeded, as has been mentioned, through Syria and Cilicia, to the parts he had formerly visited. When he came to Lystra, he chose Timothy for his associate and companion in his journey, who it is probable had been converted by his ministry, and a witness to his sufferings for the gospel when he was there before. Timothy was of Jewish extract by the mother's side, and carefully educated from his infancy in the knowledge of the scriptures; but his father was a Greek. This circumstance being generally known to the Jews, and likely to render him less acceptable among them, Paul, to obviate their prejudices, directed him to be circumcised; thus shewing his readiness to become all things to all men, so far as was consistent with a good conscience, and conducive to edification: for though, when the observance of the Mosaic law was insisted on as necessary to salvation, he steadily opposed it, and would not admit the least addition to the doctrine of free justification by the blood of Christ, he was willing to permit it to the Jewish converts in their present situation, and to accommodate himself to their weakness, for their advantage. He had before withstood the circumcision of Titus, who was a Gentile when it was urged as a necessary point; but now that debate was settled in favour of gospel-liberty: he proposed the circumcision of Timothy himself. The seeming inconsistence of his conduct vanishes, if the difference of the two cases is rightly understood; but those who act from the most enlarged principles, who know when and in what points resolution is necessary, and when and how far it is expedient to yield to others, will always be thought inconstant and inconsistent by the zealots of parties. In the course of his progress, he delivered in every city, the decree lately determined at Jerusalem, which, though primarily directed to Antioch, was of equal force, as a rule and bond of peace, in all places where there were both Jewish and Gentile converts. Thus, having watered his former planting, he proceeded to preach in Phrygia and Galatia. The route of the gospel was directed by the Spirit of God, who restrained the apostle from entering the province which is called, by way of distinction, the Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital: not that this country was to be excluded from the knowledge of Christ; for St. Paul preached in many parts of it afterwards with great success (Acts xix. 10); but the proper season was not yet come, the Lord having an important service for them first in another place. For the same reason, and by the same influence, they were prevented going into Bithynia, which they had some thoughts of attempting. Thus, in a manner undetermined where they were to labour, they came to Troas, a sea-port in the Archipelago; and when their journey was now bounded by the sea, they received a further intimation of the Lord's will, and found that he had been leading them in the right way; for they were brought to a port proper for embarking to the place where the Lord had designed to send them.

A. D. 51.] Here St. Paul had a vision by night, of a man standing by him, whose garb and expression intimated his country, and entreating him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." This vision was attended with such circumstances as left no room to doubt either its origin or meaning; so that, when he had communicated it to his companions, they assuredly collected, that the Lord called them into Macedonia. Accordingly they took shipping, and having a favourable wind, they soon arrived at Neapolis; from whence they proceeded by land to Philippi, a place of note, and a Roman colony. Their preaching and continuance in this city, which, in time, became the seat of a flourishing church, was productive of certain interesting and important events.

On the Sabbath-day they went out of the city to a place by the river side (a usual resort of the Jews for the exercise of public prayer), where, meeting with some women, as it should seem, before the rest were assembled, they spake freely of the great subject which was always uppermost in their hearts and mouths. One of them, named Lydia, a native of Thyatira, and then resident at Philippi, gave a peculiar attention to St. Paul's discourse: the reason is assigned, the Lord opened her heart. The rest heard the same words; but the hearts of all are dull, con-

tracted, and averse to spiritual truths, so that, without a divine interposition, the most powerful speakers speak in vain. Lydia heard to good purpose: she believed, and was immediately baptized, with her family, and gladly received the messengers of gospel-grace into her house.

Continuing to preach in this place so long as they remained at Philippi, they were often met by a young woman under the influence of an evil spirit, who, as they passed by, cried after them, These men are the servants of the Most High God, who declare unto us the way of salvation, in like manner as the demoniacs had sometimes confessed our Saviour's authority and mission. It may seem strange that an evil spirit should testify in favour of the preachers of the gospel; but perhaps it was either to make them suspected of a confederacy, or to draw them into a snare. However, when this had been often repeated, St. Paul, who could not bear to be spoken well of by a spirit which was not of God, commanded him, in the name of Jesus, to quit his possession. The spirit, compelled to obey, left the woman instantly. But this opened a way to give them disturbance in another manner. Her masters, to whom she had formerly brought great profit by her divining talent, finding she was no longer willing or able to procure them advantage by that means, apprehended Paul and Silas, as the chief instruments of their loss, and brought them before the magistrates with the heavy charge (which is usually revived when the preaching of the gospel interferes with the views of interest), that they exceedingly disturbed the peace of the city, by attempting innovations contrary to the established religion: they styled them Jews to the Romans, on account of their open abhorrence of idol-worship, which was carefully supported by the Roman laws and customs. The unthinking multitude soon joined in the alarm, and the magistrates, easily prejudiced by the terms of the accusation, instead of acting as impartial judges, declared themselves parties in the affair. Without examining into particulars, they violently tore off the clothes of Paul and Silas; and, having caused them to be beat with many stripes, they cast them into prison, giving the jailor a particular charge to keep them safely. This command was executed with severity. He thrust them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But no walls or dungeons can exclude those comforts of God's Spirit which are promised to those who suffer for righteousness sake, and which are able to overpower the sense of every inconvenience. Paul and Silas were so little discomposed by this cruel treatment, that they joyfully sung hymns of praise to God, and were heard by the other prisoners, who probably were surprised at the cheerfulness they expressed in such circumstances. But they were surprised much more at the testimony the Lord immediately gave in behalf of his servants; for, while they were thus engaged, on a sudden the earth trembled; the very foundations of the prison were shaken, so that all the doors flew open, and every one's fetters and bonds were instantly loosed. The noise awakened the jailor, who, supposing the prisoners were all escaped, and dreading the consequences, in the first transports of his terror, drew his sword to slay himself; for so the false wisdom of the Heathens, ignorant of the awful realities beyond the grave, taught men to avoid the pressure of present troubles by desperately plunging themselves into an unknown eternity. But St. Paul, though in another part of the prison, and in the dark, was made acquainted with his purpose, and called out to him with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm; we are all here." It increased his surprise to find that his design was made known to them, and that those whom he had treated so hardly should forget all their wrongs and interest themselves in his preservation. Such an instance of forgiveness and tenderness to an enemy, deeply affected him, and convinced him of the wrong he had done them, more forcibly than the sharpest expostulations could have done. This is indeed the peculiar triumph of a christian, to overcome evil with good. He immediately called for a light, and, in an agonyof guilt and terror, sprung in, and cast himself at the feet of those over whom he had so lately tyrannised. After this expression of his respect, and compunction for the injury he had done them, he brought them out, and addressed them with that question, of the last importance to every awakened soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas, who had but one answer to this question, suited to every rank of life, and to sinners of every degree, directed him to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only and infallible means of salvation. This faith the Lord was pleased to give; so that, when he had brought them to his house, and heard them explain the doctrine more at large, he believed, and was baptized with all his family. Upon this his sorrow was turned into permanent joy, and now it appeared why the Lord had permitted his servants to be thus rudely handled. Amongst other reasons, it was on the account of this jailor, who would otherwise have remained a stranger to the gospel, if the Lord, in the unsearchable riches of his mercy, had not thus sent it to him, and, by the concurrent dispensations of his providence, disposed him to receive it with thankfulness, as life from the dead. It likewise proved the vanity of all attempts to suppress the truth. The magistrates and people abused the preachers, and put them in prison; but the effect was quite contrary to their intentions, for by this means the jailor, the instrument of their cruelty, with his household, were converted,

and thus the apostle's enemies, through the over-ruling hand of God, became subservient to his design, and helped him to some of the first members of this new church.

The jailor, thus made partaker of the faith, expressed his gratitude to his prisoners: he washed their stripes, and set meat before them, and was soon freed from any suspence on their account; for, in the morning, the magistrates sent him orders to dismiss them from confinement. But St. Paul was willing to let them know that they had failed in their duty, and acted against those very laws and customs, of which, as Romans, they professed to be so tenacious. A citizen of Rome was not liable to bonds or scourging, and a subject of Rome, though not a citizen, could not be legally punished till he had been permitted to answer his accusers face to face, Acts, xxv. 16. The apostle was injured in both these respects; they had punished him without trial, and they had bound and beat him, though he was a Roman: he therefore asserted his privilege. He might have insisted on satisfaction; but he was a christian, a willing disciple of a suffering Saviour: he had been once a persecutor himself, and had obtained forgiveness: therefore he found it easy to forgive. His remonstrance made the magistrates willing to submit to his terms; they came themselves, and honourably dismissed their prisoners, entreating them, that, to prevent farther inconveniencies, they would withdraw from the city; which they did, after they had taken leave of Lydia and the other disciples.

A. D. 52.] From hence, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, the residence of the Roman governor. Here Paul, according to his usual custom, applying himself first to the Jews, discoursed and reasoned with them in their synagogues three successive Sabbaths, out of their own scriptures, opening * the true sense of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and then shewing their accomplishment in the person of Jesus. His labour was not wholly in vain; some of them believed, and became disciples; but the rest, and the greater part, discovered the indignation and enmity of their hearts against the truth. Under such leaders, the unthinking rabble are easily instigated to do mischief; so that they found no difficulty to raise a tumultuous mob, who assaulted the house of Jason, where Paul and Silas resided; but not finding them there, they forced away Jason, and some of the new believers, before the magistrates. The accusation was, that the preachers of the gospel, who, from the effect of their doctrine in disturbing the false peace* of sin, began to be sufficiently described, when spoken of as men who turned the world upside down, and threw all into confusion wherever they appeared, were come thither also; that Jason had received and countenanced them; and that their fundamental tenets were inconsistent with obedience to government, since they professed and inculcated subjection to one Jesus, whom they styled their King. By such misrepresentations, the enemies of the gospel-doctrine have often aimed to render it obnoxious to the civil powers. The rulers were alarmed at this accusation; but being unwilling to proceed to extremities, though obliged to take some notice of what seemed to affect the interest of Cæsar, they took sufficient security of Jason and the rest for their good behaviour, and dismissed them without farther trouble. In the mean time, Paul and Silas, against whom the violence had been chiefly intended, were sent safely away by the brethren to Berea, where, regardless of their past dangers and sufferings, they pursued their endeavours to recommend the gospel to the Jews; and, in this place, they met with a friendly reception. It is said the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica; for to be open to conviction and information is the mark of a noble mind: they were of a more free and ingenuous temper, not slaves to the fear of man, or the power of prejudice: they heard with candour, and examined the scriptures themselves to find the truth. The gospel of Christ is suited to give the fullest satisfaction to inquirers of this spirit. Accordingly, many of them believed. But when the Jews of Thessalonica were informed of this, they followed Paul thither, with a view to repeat the part they had acted in their own city; but they came too late: Paul had already planted the gospel; and, leaving Silas and Timothy, who were less obnoxious, to remain a little longer with the brethren, he was conducted first towards the sea, to elude the attempts of his enemies, and afterwards to Athens, a city which, for its eminence in literature and all the polite arts, was styled, by general consent, the seat of the Muses.

While the apostle waited at Athens for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, his spirit was inflamed with a lively concern for the honour

* Acts, xvii. 3. Opening and alleging; first explaining the true sense of the passage, and then laying down plain and undeniable deductions from it, applicable to the case in hand. Thus much is implied in the Greek words διανοιγων και παρατιθεμενος. A proper model for preachers and writers in divinity. How many controversies would cease, how much time would be redeemed, how many offences would be avoided, if it was universally followed, if the scriptures were explained in their true sense and connection, and nothing advanced but what could be fairly deduced from such an explanation.

* It is still thought a sufficient and unanswerable objection against the preaching of the gospel, to say, These opinions cause divisions and separations, and break the peace of families and communities. We may bring the point to a short issue: Did our Lord foretell this as one sure and perpetual consequence that would attend the prevalence of his gospel, or did he not? If he did not, what is the meaning of Matth. xii. 34—36? If he did then by what name are we to call that manner of preaching, which has either no tendency, or no power, to disturb the false and dangerous peace of a wicked world?

of God, and the welfare of souls: it grieved him to see a city, so famed for refinement and philosophy, wholly given to idolatry, and, with respect to the most important concerns of life, quite upon a level with the most ignorant barbarians. St. Paul is generally allowed, by those who will allow him little else, to have been a man of taste and letters. He was now at Athens, the school of philosophy, and centre of the fine arts: painting, statuary, architecture, and elegance appeared in every quarter: but the affecting observation he had made of the state of the inhabitants, so filled his mind, that he could take little notice of any thing else. To those who understand the nearness and importance of an eternal state, the highest improvements of unsanctified reason afford little more entertainment than the trivial sports of children, or the more wretched amusements of lunatics. He was so struck with the ignorance, superstition, and wickedness of the people, that he could relish none of the beauties of the place; but, full of a different emotion, compassionately laboured to inspire them with true wisdom. He was soon encountered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, the respectable advocates for those principles of pleasure and pride, to one or the other of which all men are enslaved till the gospel sets them free. Here, in some measure accommodating himself to the prevailing taste, he reasoned with the reasoners, and silenced the wise men of the world, in their own way, by dint of argument; but the contest was unequal; their syllogisms soon failed them; and they were forced to retreat to their last refuge, an affected wit and raillery. Unable to answer the force of his discourses, they triumphed without a victory, and expressed their contempt of him and his doctrine by a word of the lowest and most despicable signification, which our version not improperly renders a babler; but perhaps no term in our language can sufficiently express the poignancy of the original. Others so entirely mistook the state of the question, that they thought he was a publisher or setter forth of strange gods; they thought that Jesus and the Resurrection were deities they had not before heard of; and his discourse always turning upon these topics, they concluded, indeed with reason, that his only business and desire was to proclaim to all the divinity whom he worshipped. And it is no wonder that, from a half-attention to his words, they should be induced to personify the Resurrection as a deity, since the Heathens had altars erected, not only to Honour, Virtue, and Liberty, but to the vices and disorders of human nature, such as Fear, Shame, Famine, and Fevers.

This weak mistake gave occasion to summon him before the council, who bore the name of Areopagus, or the Hill of Mars, from the place where they met, an assembly in high estimation for authority and wisdom, and whose particular office it was to superintend the public religion, and preserve it from innovation. It does not appear, however, that he underwent a formal trial before them. His opponents seemed rather disposed to gratify their curiosity than their malice: their politeness, perhaps, made them something averse to the severer forms of prosecution, and content with the less invidious, though to many not less formidable methods, of scorn and ridicule. Their prevailing passion was the love of novelty; they spent their time in telling or hearing some new, or, as the Greek expresses it, some newer thing. The expected news lost its relish the moment it was known: and they were always in search for something newer still; therefore the gospel, though the strongest, as well as the most important news they had ever met with, could not engage such volatile minds: while it was the newer thing, the freshest news, they were content to listen; but as soon as they were satisfied what it was, they wanted to hear something else. The apostle no where met with so little success as amongst this polite, learned, ignorant people; and wherever this Athenian spirit prevails, it retards the success of the gospel more than all the arts and violence of persecution.

The discourse of the apostle on this occasion is equally a standard of fine address and of just reasoning. He had observed their religious rites and worship with attention, and had selected from among their numerous altars the one which was most fit for his purpose. The beauty of his exordium is obscured by the expression, *too superstitious*, in our version: the Greek word to which it answers is ambiguous, and suited to bespeak a favourable hearing, rather than importing an abrupt reproof; *q. d.* "I perceive, indeed, Athenians, that you are observant of the invisible powers in an unusual manner; for, besides the variety of temples and altars which you have in common with other cities of Greece, I observed one with a peculiar inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. This God, as yet unknown to you, is he whom I serve; and the new doctrine, of which you ask me, relates to his will and worship." This was the most happy and pertinent medium to enlarge from that could be imagined. The Athenians, always eager to hear some newer thing, expected an account of new deities, but Paul referred them to an altar and inscription among themselves, which, merely by being obvious, had escaped their reflection. It is to be feared that this observation and inscription may suit the devotions of many who think themselves christians. The same address is visible in his whole argument. To the Jews he quoted the books of the holy scriptures; but with these Heathens he appealed to the volume of creation, and argued, from the impresses of power, wisdom, and goodness everywhere dis-

played before their eyes, the excellence and independence of their great Author, how little he stood in need of men, and how unworthy of his divine majesty all their laborious inventions were, while they thought to honour him by worshipping the works of their own hands: he asserted the providence and omnipresence of God, that he was the fountain of life and all its comforts, the supreme disposer of all events, and the common Father of mankind, confirming this part of his doctrine by a quotation from Aratus, one of their own poets. He afterwards proceeded to the topics of revelation, a resurrection to future life, and a final judgment by the man Christ Jesus. It would require too much room to point out particularly the spirit, propriety, and evidence of this short sermon. But no oratory or reasoning can change the heart. The effect was the same, as may be observed amongst ourselves, when much inferior instruments declare the truths of God: some mocked, and accounted this wisdom the merest folly; others, pleased with his manner, and perhaps affected with some transient emotions of mind, expressed a willingness to hear him again; and a few, a very few, believed, among whom was Dionysius one of the Areopagite judges.

Having so little encouragement to prolong his stay at Athens, the apostle proceeded to Corinth, at that time accounted the chief city of Greece. Here he unexpectedly found companions prepared for him (Acts xviii.). Aquila, a native of Pontus, by birth a Jew, with Priscilla his wife, had received the faith of the gospel in Italy, from whence they had lately been constrained to remove by an edict of the emperor, enjoining all Jews to depart from Rome. Whether the christians were particularly aimed at by the name of Jews in this decree is uncertain; but as their Lord and Master had lived in Judea, and the first preachers and converts were generally of that nation, perhaps, likewise, because they asserted and proved their doctrines from those books for which the Jews professed the highest veneration, the christians were for some time considered as Jews by most of the Heathens. This happy pair, partners in faith and affection, were led by that Divine Providence which certainly, though secretly, guides the steps of his servants, to seek a retreat in Corinth, about the time St. Paul arrived there. They soon became acquainted, and, of course, intimate. He often mentions them in his writings, as having, upon many occasions, afforded him help and comfort; for, as in nature so in grace, none are so sufficient to themselves but they may be glad of assistance from others, even from such as are in many respects their inferiors. They abode and wrought together, being of the same business; for though St. Paul well understood his liberty, and that, as a preacher of the gospel, he had a right to expect a maintenance from those to whom he ministered, yet he condescended to work as a common handicraft, at the employment of making tents. One reason of his submitting to this, he informs us himself, was a prudent precaution to obviate any insinuations that might be raised or received against him of a design to make gain of godliness, or to abuse his influence to mercenary purposes. But his example may farther teach us that secular employments are not in themselves incompatible with a faithful and regular discharge of the gospel-ministry, when the circumstances of the times may so require. But his main and proper business, to which he always attended, in season and out of season,* was preaching the gospel of Christ. To this he addressed himself at Corinth, first (as usual) to the Jews, being pressed in spirit, borne on by a constraining sense of the love of Christ and the worth of souls, and probably more confirmed and warmed by the accounts brought him by Silas and Timothy, who rejoined him here from Macedonia. Animated, rather than discouraged, by the opposition he had formerly met with, he strenuously urged to the Jews, from their own scriptures, the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah, with such evidence as must have gained their assent, had they not been hardened and obstinate; but when they persisted in returning contradiction and despite to his repeated labours of love, he at length gave them up, and told them, that having discharged his duty and his conscience, their blood would be upon their own heads; that their guilt was most aggravated, and their destruction approaching: and that, for the future, he would frequent their synagogues no more, but address himself to the Gentiles. He accordingly preached in the house of one Justus, near the synagogue, and though most of the Jews were hardened beyond the reach of conviction, yet the Lord had a small remnant amongst them here likewise. Crispus, a chief ruler, or president of the synagogue, believed with all his house; and of the Heathens many were converted and baptized.

If Corinth was less celebrated than Athens for philosophy and science, it was more so for riches and luxury, which are no less powerful hinderances to the reception of the truth. This consideration, joined to the violent spirit of his opposers, might perhaps have prompted

* 2 Tim. iv. 2. Be instant in season and out of season: not unseasonably, as supposing a time in which it would be better to forbear, but in season, at set and stated times, and out of season, that is occasionally. Improve every opportunity that offers, not on the Lord's day only, but on any other; not only in a solemn and full discourse, but let the glory of God, and the good of souls, be your scope in every conversation. It answers to the account the apostle gives of his own conduct. He preached publicly, and from house to house, by night and by day, Acts xx. 20, 31. As a physician, besides his ordinary round of practice, is ready to afford his help upon every sudden application, this should be the aim of a gospel-minister; he should be constant to all his stated appointments, and willing to make the most of every unexpected call to service.

him to a speedy departure; but the Lord, whom he served, appeared to him in a vision, and bid him not be afraid or discouraged, but continue to preach, assuring him his labour should not be in vain; for, though present appearances might promise but little success [A. D. 53], he had many people known to himself in that proud, sensual, idolatrous city. It signifies but little what enemies or difficulties a faithful minister may be threatened with, if the Lord has many people in that place; he who sent him to call them out of darkness into his marvellous light, will support and defend him, so that either none shall rise against him, or at least none be able to prevail to his real harm. That the people, whom the Lord here spoke of as his own, were no better, either by nature or practice, than others, is plain from what the apostle reminds them of after their conversion, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. We learn from the same epistle (chap. ii. 3), that his conflicts and exercises at this time were very great. Supported, however, by such a seasonable and gracious encouragement, he remained there a year and a half; and all the efforts of his enemies were insufficient either to damp his zeal and activity, or to prevent the success of his labours, though the Lord permitted them to try what they could do, and thereby more clearly shewed that the safety of his servants depends on himself.

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (who, as it seems by Luke's expression, entered upon his government during the apostle's abode at Corinth), the Jews appeared tumultuously before the tribunal, with the old accusation, that he subverted the laws of Moses. Gallio prevented Paul's intended defence, and refused to interfere in points foreign to the Roman laws: He said, that if their charge had been laid for any trespass or immorality, he would readily have taken cognizance of the affair, but should leave them to settle their religious disputes between themselves. With this reprimand he dismissed, or rather drove them from his presence. The conduct of Gallio in this affair has been considered in different lights, and praised or censured accordingly. History gives him a fair character for equity and moderation; and it must be allowed he judged right, in refusing to interpose the civil authority to give sanction to persecution: yet he seems, upon this occasion, to have discovered that political indifference which has prompted so many great and wise men, in the world's estimation, to treat the gospel as a trivial scheme unworthy their notice. He rather shewed contempt than impartiality: he would not hear either party, because he despised both, and therefore drove them away with scorn. In fine, the Jews not only failed in their design, but were themselves assaulted by some of the inhabitants, who beat Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, even in the open court, and Gallio, though he saw it, cared for none of these things; which is a further proof that he was influenced by some other motives than impartiality and a regard to justice, or he would not have suffered his authority to be insulted, and a person (upon his own principles innocent) abused before his face. I suppose (though it is a controverted point) that the Sosthenes here mentioned was at that time an enemy to Paul, and joined in the prosecution attempted against him. Perhaps he was afterwards converted, and accompanied the apostle in his travels, as this name is prefixed, with his own, to his first epistle to the Corinthians.

NERO, A. D. 54.] St. Paul, after about two years stay in Greece, from his first landing at Macedonia, embarked at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, intending for Syria. In this voyage they touched at Ephesus, the chief city of the Proper or Proconsular Asia. Here, as in other places, he entered into the Jews synagogues, desirous, if possible, to lead them to the knowlege of the Messiah. At this city he left his dear companions Aquila and Priscilla, who would willingly have detained him longer; but St. Paul having formed the plan of his progress in such a manner as he judged most suitable to his main design, readily sacrificed the dictates of affection to the calls of duty, and persisted in his purpose to be at Jerusalem on the approaching passover: he took leave of them therefore, with a promise of returning at a proper time, and proceeding on his voyage, landed at Cæsarea, from whence he went to Jerusalem. His stay here was not long: having answered the design of his journey, and conversed with the brethren, he revisited the places where he had formerly preached, and went first to Antioch, and from thence through the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia. In this circuit he lost no time, but published the glad tidings of salvation, and confirmed the hearts of the disciples, wherever he came.

While he was on this service, there came to Ephesus a Jew of Alexandria, named Apollos: he had been as yet only instructed in the rudiments of the faith, so far as was communicated by the teaching and baptism of John; but though his knowledge was not extensive, his zeal was lively and fervent, and having a prompt elocution, and great readiness in the scriptures, he preached concerning Christ with much freedom and earnestness, according to the measure of light he had received. Aquila and Priscilla were amongst his hearers; and having more experience and knowledge than himself, they easily perceived wherein he was deficient, and, with candour and tenderness, instructed him farther. This passage is worthy the notice both of preachers and hearers. What Apollos had learned, he willingly communicated; what he was yet ignorant of, he as willingly received when proposed to him

his zeal and humility went hand in hand. This is an amiable and thriving character. The man who is faithful to present light, and open to farther conviction, will soon be wise and successful; the Lord will provide him both teachers and hearers; he shall profit others, and be profited himself every day. The prudence and moderation of Aquila and Priscilla are no less commendable; they did not acquiesce in all he said, because he was eloquent and mighty in the scriptures; neither did they reject and disdain him because they knew more than he, much less expose and revile him as a low ignorant preacher, but they spoke to him in private: they approved what was right, and shewed him mildly and faithfully wherein he was defective; they commended his zeal, and improved his knowledge. With these advantages, and letters of recommendation to the brethren, he went from thence to Corinth, where he was highly serviceable to the church, publicly maintaining and proving against the Jews, with great earnestness of spirit and strength of argument, that Jesus was the Messiah.

Not long after his departure (Acts xix.), Paul having completed his progress through the upper or interior parts of Asia Minor, returned, according to his promise, to Ephesus. Here he found some more disciples, who, like Apollos, though acquainted with the doctrine and baptism of John, were hitherto strangers to those peculiar gifts, graces, and comforts, which, as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, were bestowed on the believers in Jesus; but, by the imposition of the apostle's hands, they were immediately made partakers of the same benefits.

A. D. 55.] The apostle, unwilling to give up his own people, the Jews, continued his labours of love among them for three months, if, by any means, he might bring them to the acknowledgement of the truth; but at length perceiving, that, instead of yielding, they hardened themselves still more, and obstinately laboured to traduce and defame the author and way of salvation before the people, he finally desisted, and selecting those who had received the gospel from the many who might hinder and confuse them, he formed them into a society among themselves. He continued daily to preach and defend the gospel, for two years afterwards, in a public school, with indefatigable zeal and diligence, seconding his more stated services with occasional and pressing exhortations from house to house, and watering the seed with many prayers and tears. His labours were not in vain; he had great success, not only in the city of Ephesus, but amongst many, who, resorting thither from other parts, and with different views, were providentially led to hear him, and being divinely convinced themselves, carried home the joyful tidings with them: so that the knowledge of the gospel was generally spread throughout the province. The attention of the people was still farther excited, and their prejudices softened, by the numerous displays and visible tendency of that divine power by which the Lord confirmed the words of his servant. Many striking miracles, emblematical of the healing efficacy of gospel-grace, were wrought by the most inconsiderable means; so that persons afflicted with various maladies, or possessed by evil spirits, were perfectly restored to health, by the application of handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his body.

Among the various methods by which the gospel has been opposed, one is by a feeble imitation and a pretended acknowledgement of some of its principles, while the heart is unacquainted or unaffected with the design and scope of the whole doctrine. Enmity, or, at best, interest, is often the spring of many attempts that are veiled under a fair profession of good words; but such attempts will always issue in the disappointment or confusion of those who venture on them. An instance of this kind happened at Ephesus: some vagrant Jews, who made claim to a power of exorcising or dispossessing evil spirits, struck with the miracles wrought in the name of Jesus, presumed to adopt this sacred name into the number of their professed mysteries; and meeting with a fit subject for the exercise of their art, they undertook to adjure the evil spirit to depart from a man, by the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. But the man, under the influence of the evil spirit, insulted and exposed them; he acknowledged the authority of Jesus, and the fidelity of Paul; but, demanding farther, who they were that durst make free with these names? far from obeying their summons, he fiercely assaulted them, and forced them, though seven in number, to flee for their lives, naked, wounded, and terrified. Great indeed is the power of the name of Jesus; but when not pronounced by faith, it is spoken in vain: Satan laughs at such vain pretenders, and prevails against them. So, when those who are destitute of faith, undertake to write or preach concerning Jesus, it will seldom prove to more purpose than if they attempted to exorcise the people; instead of delivering others from the power of Satan, they are more and more subjected to him themselves; and, unless the grace of God interposes to teach them better, their latter end is usually worse than their beginning.

This public defeat of the enemy added to the triumph of the gospel and the honour of the apostle, and produced a reverence and awe in the hearts of many, convincing them of the power of evil spirits when not restrained, and the danger of trifling with the name or ministry of Christ; and many who had been addicted to the magic arts (for which Ephesus was peculiarly infamous) renounced their de-

lusions, confessed their folly and wickedness to the apostle, made a public profession of the gospel, and, in proof that their faith and repentance were sincere, brought the books containing the secrets and principles of their pretended skill, and publicly committed them to the flames. These were either so numerous or so dear, that the value was computed at fifty thousand pieces of silver. What this sum might be in our money, the learned are not agreed; the lowest calculations fix it at about fifteen hundred pounds, while some compute it at more than seven thousand. We are not, however, sure they were all on the subject of magic; a variety of other disquisitions might possibly contribute to enlarge the pile. Curious books and curious arts had been multiplied; but the one book of truth now made the rest useless and tasteless; they had now found the pearl of great price, and willingly parted with their once admired pebbles: and we may believe, that if the worth and power of the holy scriptures were once generally known, many curious libraries in our days, if they escaped unburnt, would at least remain unread and unnoticed. When the wise thus renounced their wisdom, and the artful their gain, burnt their books with their own hands, and devoted themselves to the study of the scriptures alone, it is once more observed, so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed!

A. D. 57.] The apostle, of whom it may be said with more propriety than of Cæsar, that he accounted nothing done while any thing remained to do, in the midst of his important engagements at Ephesus, was still meditating new services; he retained a warm affection and care for his friends in different, distant, and opposite quarters; he had thoughts of revisiting Macedonia and Greece, and, from thence, once more to go to Jerusalem; and, not content with reviewing his past labours, he longed to preach in places he had not yet seen,—saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome: nor was Rome the boundary of his views; for from thence he proposed to proceed to Spain, Rom. xv. 24. We are taught from our infancy to admire those, who, in the language of the world, are styled great captains and conquerors, because they burned with a desire to carry slaughter and terror into every part of the globe, and to aggrandize their names by the depopulation of countries, and the destruction of their species, while this generous spirit of St. Paul is almost totally overlooked: unwearied by difficulties, undismayed by dangers, unsatisfied with the greatest success, unaffected with the justest applause, he seemed to lay his benevolent schemes wide as the human race: he reaped no profit, he sought no praise; he rejected the allurements of pleasure, to which the greatest conquerors have often been irresolute slaves; he endured the reproach and contempt of the people, which no hero, but the true christian, was ever strong enough to bear with patience; and all this only to make others partakers of the happiness which he enjoyed himself. However, finding it necessary to continue some time longer where he was, he dispatched his beloved Timothy to Macedonia, to apprize his friends of his intention, and to prepare them for his visit, when a proper opportunity should permit.

In the mean time (Acts xix. 23), an incident fell out which well illustrates the causes and genius of that opposition and outcry which is usually made when the power of gospel-truth interferes with the passions and interests of designing men. St. Paul's great success and the additions daily made to the church of Christ, had a visible tendency to lessen the estimation and gain of those whose chief resource was in the ignorance and wickedness of the people. These were not backward to take the alarm, and had been waiting an opportunity, to shew their resentment. The Lord, who holds all hearts in his own hands, had restrained them hitherto, that his work of grace might not be disturbed; but when the apostle was upon the point of departure, this restraint was in some measure taken off. The temple of Diana, at Ephesus, was celebrated for its magnificence far and near; so that many shrines or models of it were made for sale, and in much demand. This branch of business brought in considerable gain to the silversmiths, and other mechanics; but if the gospel of Christ continued to spread, it was highly probable that these, with many other such toys, would be little inquired after. Demetrius, a leading man amongst them, convening his brethren and dependants, and as many as he could, whose interest seemed more immediately affected by this novel doctrine, harangued them with much address and influence on a point in which they had so near and mutual a concern; he reminded them, with a seasonable frankness, that their gain was at stake:* this was the main argument; yet, as one not wholly governed by mercenary views, he expressed a very tender concern for the honour of Diana, lest her worship, and their advantage, should cease together, as they certainly would, if this Paul should be peaceably suffered to persuade the people, that they can be no gods which are made with hands. An appeal to the two prevailing passions of mankind, interest and superstition, is seldom made in vain. The arguments of Demetrius have been employed a thousand times over against the gospel,

* This is the main objection against the gospel, though pretexts are industriously sought to hide it; it alarms those who thrive by the ignorance or wickedness of the times; gain is the motive, the honour of Diana the plea. But it may be easily proved, that such occupations as are endangered by the success of the gospel, are in themselves injurious to the peace and good order of civil society.

though all opposers have not had his honesty in avowing their leading motive. The doctrine which discountenances folly and wickedness, will certainly be defamed and resisted by all who find their account in promoting them; but as this motive is rather invidious, if insisted on alone, they express likewise an earnest zeal for whatever tenets have the sanction of authority, antiquity, or custom, with which their private interest is inseparably connected. He had said enough to inflame his hearers; and these were sufficiently numerous to stimulate the unthinking rabble, who, though quiet till they are headed by artful leaders, are easily roused to rage and tumult when thus influenced, as the sea that has been long calm obeys the impulse of the rising gale. The outcry began by Demetrius, and his companions; Great is Diana of the Ephesians, was soon resounded through the city; and the multitude, being informed that their established religion, their stately temple, and costly rites, were all in danger, rushed from all parts tumultuously into the public theatre, dragging two of St. Paul's dear companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, along with them, perhaps with a design to throw them to the wild beasts, which were kept for the barbarous diversion of the people at their public games. The apostle, warmly concerned for his friends safety, and confiding in the goodness of his cause, and the providence of his God, was not intimidated by this violent uproar, but purposed to face the enraged mob; but the earnest solicitations of the disciples, who could not but be anxious for the event, restrained him: and even some who had not received his doctrine, from a regard to what they knew of his character and conduct, employed their endeavours to preserve him. These, in the text, are styled Asiarchs, persons of note who presided in the regulation of the games. Some of them sent to inform him, that in the present confusion, it was not in their power to protect him from violence, and therefore desired he would keep in safety. Though his resolution was not shaken, yet judging this might be a providential intimation, that it was not his duty at that time to expose himself, he desisted. The mob, thus disappointed with respect to him, and secretly restrained from hurting the others, continued in the utmost confusion, though few knew why they were assembled, unless it was to join in the cry, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, which they repeated without intermission for two hours. When they had thus exhausted themselves, and their passions, through weariness, began to subside, a public officer of the city seized the favourable moment to expostulate with them concerning their behaviour; he spoke with freedom and address, but with that indifference which the wise men of the world so frequently discover in religious concerns. Many deserve commendation for their readiness to allow others the peaceable possession of their own sentiments, who, at the same time, deserve our pity, that they have no inclination or leisure to inquire for themselves. He allowed, in general terms, the honours of Diana, and pleaded, in behalf of the men, that they had not spoken against Diana in particular, or intermeddled with her temple,* Acts xix. 37. This was probably true in fact: St. Paul declared the folly of idolatry in general, but did not enter into direct confutation of any detached part of the Heathen mythology: he proposed the plain truth of the gospel; and when this was received, the whole system of idol-worship fell to the ground of itself. He farther reminded them, that if they had any just cause of complaint, they ought to seek redress in a course of law;† and then hinting at the consequences they were liable to, if called to a strict account‡ for their riot, he prevailed on them to separate and depart quietly. Thus the apostle, though threatened with a most imminent and formidable danger, was preserved unhurt, and suffered neither in his person nor character. An encouraging proof that those who act in the path of duty, and depend on the power of God, are equally safe in all times and circumstances; no less safe when surrounded by enraged enemies, than when encircled by kind and assiduous friends.

He did not continue long at Ephesus after this tumult; but taking leave of the disciples, went to Troas, and from thence (as he had purposed) to Macedonia, Acts xx. We have but little account of this progress in the history of the Acts; but from some passages of his epistles (2 Cor. ii. 12. 13. and vii. 5.), written about that time, we are informed, that his exercises and trials, both inward and outward, were very great. His solicitous affection for the churches was far from being the smallest source of his troubles, and cost him many a pang.§ He loved them in the bowels of Jesus Christ; he could willingly have devoted

* The words *robbers of churches*, should rather be rendered *robbers of temples*; for though the word *church* is now expressive of some particular places of worship, it is never in the New Testament applied to buildings, but to persons only.

† The servants of Christ will seldom be compelled to answer for themselves in a course of law, except in those places where sanguinary laws are contrived purposely against them. In default of these, their adversaries will often stoop to appeal from the magistrate to the mob.

‡ It seems, however, there was no more said of it. It had been a notorious breach of the peace, but then it had been against St. Paul and his companions, who had sufficient favour shewen them if they came off with their lives. In any other case, such a tumult would have been deemed a high offence.

§ 2 Cor. xi. 28. "That which cometh on me daily." The word is *επισυστασις*.—and gives the idea of a camp or castle hard beset with continual onsets and assaults; or of a man who has his way to force through a great crowd that are coming to meet him; so that he must not only be much encumbered and hindered, but unless he exerts himself to the utmost, is in danger of being trampled under their feet. By this lively figure, the apostle describes the part he took in the welfare of all the churches. His cares on their behalf were so numerous, urgent, and continual, that they found full employment for his prayers, his thoughts, and his time

his labours and life to each of them, but he could not be with them all; and knowing the weakness of the heart, the subtlety of Satan, and the obvious temptations arising from the fear of man, the love of the world, and the arts of false teachers, he was jealous over those from whom he was absent with a godly jealousy, 2 Cor. xi. 2. At Troas he expected to have met with Titus, on his return from Macedonia; but missing him, though he had favourable opportunities of preaching the gospel at Troas (2 Cor. ii. 12. 13.), his mind was not at liberty to improve them; but he hasted to be in Macedonia, that he might the sooner be satisfied. There, he tells us himself, he had no rest, but was troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears; but he speaks of it as a seasonable and gracious interposition of that God, whose character and prerogative it is to be a comforter of those that are cast down (2 Cor. vii. 6.), that, in these circumstances, he was comforted by the coming of Titus, who relieved his fears by the favourable account he brought him from Corinth.

A. D. 58.] How long he staid in these parts we are not told; but, in general, that he spent some time, and visited many places; and it seems to have been in this circuit that he preached in Illyricum, a part of which country borders upon Macedonia. He afterwards proceeded to Greece, where he staid three months; he intended to have embarked from thence at some port, and to have proceeded immediately to Syria by sea; but, upon information that his restless enemies, the Jews, were plotting to intercept and kill him, he determined to return through Macedonia. Several of his friends offered to accompany him through Asia, who, embarking before him, waited for him at Troas, where he, at a convenient time, joined them from Philippi, and remained there seven days.

On the first day of the week, they had a solemn assembly; and St. Paul, who was to take a long and last farewell of the disciples there the next morning, indulged his own and their affections, by protracting his discourses and advices beyond the usual bounds; he spent the whole day, even till midnight, in expatiating upon the pleasing topics of redeeming love. This does not, indeed, appear to have been his usual practice; but should a company of believers now spend a night together in the exercises they best love, though it were but once, and when they had no expectation of meeting again till they should meet in glory, it would be sufficient to open the mouths of prejudice and slander amongst them, as regardless of the order of families, and the duties of common life. Particular notice is taken, that they had many lights in the upper chamber, where they were met, perhaps to remind us, that the first christians were careful to conduct their assemblies with order and propriety, so as to give no just cause of offence; yet their enemies quickly began to charge them with meeting in the dark, and invented many false and wicked slanders upon that supposition. The like falsehoods have been often repeated. A young man of the company, either less attentive, or less warmly engaged than the rest, dropped asleep, and not only lost much of an invaluable opportunity, but fell out of a window, in which he was seated, from the third storey, and was taken up to appearance dead; an incident which might have given those who hated the apostle a farther occasion to clamour, and to revile his unseasonable zeal; but he went down in the spirit of faith and prayer, and embracing the young man, restored him to his friends alive. After they were recovered from the hurry of this event, and had taken some refreshment, he resumed his discourse, and continued in conference with them till the break of day,* when he bade them farewell.

His companions went along the coast by shipping at Assos, a place not very distant, and to which the apostle chose to go by land, and on foot. Some think he did this by way of self-denial; but it is not likely that he, who was the great asserter of evangelical and filial liberty, would lay any stress upon such singularities. Self may readily submit to many things of this sort, and derive food, complacence, and strength from them. It is more probable he chose to walk, either that he might embrace occasions of service by the way, or for the advantage of leisure and retirement; for christians engaged in a very public sphere of life (as he was) are glad to redeem opportunities of being alone, at the price of some inconveniences. But this circumstance is mentioned as characterising the simplicity of his spirit; though greatly honoured, and greatly beloved, he thought it not beneath him to walk from place to place, like an obscure person.

Embarking at Assos, and having touched at Mitylene and Samos, intermediate places, they arrived in a few days at Miletus. St. Paul purposely passed Ephesus, that he might not be detained or grieved by the many dear friends he had in that city; for he was resolved, if possible, to be at Jerusalem on the approaching day of Pentecost; but from Miletus he sent for the elders or bishops of the church at Ephesus, to receive his final charge and benediction. When they came, he addressed them in a solemn and affectionate discourse. The substance of it, which is re-

* This, as we have observed, was upon a particular occasion: they expected to see each other no more, and hardly knew how to part. The like circumstances might justify such protracted meetings of christian friends still; but, in general, they are to be avoided. If frequently indulged, they would break in upon other things, indispose those who attend for the ordinary duties of their stations, be prejudicial to health, and, for these and other reasons, prove a cause of offence.

corded for our instruction, if considered only as a piece of oratory, has been often admired and celebrated by critics; but there are strokes in it, the force and beauty of which no critic can truly relish, except he has tasted of the same spirit which filled and animated the apostle's heart when he spoke it.

He began with an appeal to themselves concerning his conduct while resident among them, and reminded them of the diligence, fidelity, and tenderness which he had manifested in the course of his ministry, how he had seconded his public instructions with private and repeated exhortations, watering them both with many prayers and tears: he informed them of the object and service of his present journey, and how uncertain he was what the issue might prove to himself. But though he had general intimations from the Spirit of God, to expect afflictions and bonds in every place, his determination was fixed; he had counted the cost, and saw that nothing he could meet with was worth his serious thought, so that he might be able to fulfil his ministry with honour, and to finish his course with joy;* but this he said, he was assured of, that the pleasing opportunities he had enjoyed with the believers at Ephesus, and in that neighbourhood, were ended; and that they now saw and heard him for the last time. Only those who know the endeared affection that subsists between a minister of Christ and those to whom God has made him the instrument of saving their souls, can judge of the emotion with which he spoke, and his friends heard, this part of his discourse. When he had thus touched and engaged their tenderest passions, and prepared them to receive his parting solemn charge with a due attention, he exhorted them, in the most animated terms, to follow his example, in performing the part of faithful overseers, or bishops, in the church which he now committed to their care; suggesting two most powerful motives, the consideration that they were appointed to this office by the Holy Ghost, and that the souls entrusted to them were the church of God, which he had purchased with his own blood. He likewise warned them, that the utmost circumspection would be needful; for that he foresaw, that, after his departure, grievous wolves would enter amongst them, not sparing the flock; and also, that out of their own number of professed disciples, men should arise, speaking perverse things. This double danger of false teachers from without and a restless curious spirit within the fold, all societies of christians are exposed to; and it is a strong call to ministers in all ages, to be mindful of the apostle's charge, and to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. He again put them in remembrance of his own conduct, his assiduity and disinterestedness; that he had not sought his own advantage, but had rather wrought with his own hands, that he might not be chargeable to them: finally, commending them to God, and the word of his grace, he closed his discourse, with proposing to their consideration an aphorism of our Lord Jesus, and illustrated by the whole tenor of his life, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This sentiment, so highly expressive of the spirit of the divine author, which had been hitherto preserved in the hearts and mouths of his disciples, was upon this occasion inserted into the written word, and is the only authentic tradition concerning him which has been transmitted to the church. Having finished his pathetic address, he kneeled down, and prayed with them. The final farewell was very affecting; for how could those who owed him their souls, who had been so often comforted and edified by his instructions and example, consider that they were to see him no more in this world, without being greatly moved. They accompanied him to the ship, and then returned. The word which Luke, the historian, makes use of upon this occasion, intimates, that the concern was mutual: it signifies, to draw asunder by force, to separate things closely joined together: "When we had gotten from them," or, as it might be rendered, "When we had torn ourselves from them," well expresses the close union of their affections, and the sorrow and reluctance which both sides felt at parting.

When this struggle was over, St. Paul and his company put to sea with a favourable gale (Acts xxi.); and, having touched at Coos and Rhodes, two islands of note in the Ægean sea, continued their course to Patara in Lycia, where they seasonably met with a ship upon the point of departure for Phœnicia; and, embarking in her, they passed on the south side of Cyprus, and had a safe voyage to Tyre, where, that being the destined port of the vessel, they landed. As he was not now very far distant from Jerusalem, and had finished that part of his voyage in which he was most exposed to unavoidable delays by the occurrences of winds and weather, so that he had a fair probability of reaching Jerusalem within his proscribed time, he consented to stay seven days with some disciples† he found there,

* The state of obedience and service which we owe to him who died for us, and rose again, is often compared to a race or course; by which is intimated, the assiduity with which we ought to pursue our calling, the brevity of our labours and sufferings, the little attention we should pay to objects around us, and that our eye and aim should be constantly directed to the prize set before us. Every step in this race is attended with trouble; but the end will be unspeakable joy. Those to whom the King shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," will not then complain of the difficulties they met by the way.

† Ανευροντες τους μαθητας might be rendered, *finding out the disciples*. There seems no reason for suppressing the article, and the verb is used for finding out, in consequence of some description or enquiry, Luke ii.

Acts xxi. 4. From some of these he received an intimation, by a prophetic impulse, of the dangers he would be exposed to if he went to Jerusalem; but he knew whom he had believed, and, being convinced that his duty called him to persevere, he was not intimidated by a prospect of suffering. At the appointed time he embarked again, the disciples, with their families, accompanying him to the water side, where he took leave of them in an affectionate prayer upon the sea-shore.* He landed next at Ptolemais, a city of Palestine, and staid one day with the brethren there. The next day he proceeded to Cæsarea, and lodged at the house of Philip, the deacon, who had four daughters endued with the spirit of prophecy.

During his stay at Cæsarea, a prophet, named Agabus, came down from Jerusalem; and, agreeable to the manner of the ancient prophets, who frequently enforced their declarations by expressive signs and actions, he bound his own hands and feet with the apostle's girdle, assuring them in the name of the Holy Spirit, that in the same manner the Jews would bind the hands and feet of the man to whom that girdle belonged, and deliver him up as a criminal to the Roman power. Upon these repeated premonitions of what he was to expect, not only the disciples of Cæsarea, but those who had come with him, earnestly entreated him to desist from his purpose. We may learn from this passage that the clearest intelligence of approaching danger is not always a sufficient warrant to decline it, even when, in the judgment of our brethren, we might decline it without sin. St. Paul was satisfied that, all circumstances considered, it was right for him to proceed: he had taken his determination upon good grounds, was brought so far on his way in safety; and to be told (though from an infallible authority) that his views of service could not be completed without great risk and trouble to himself, did not discourage him in the least. He was less affected by the prospect of sufferings from the Jews than by the solicitations of his friends, and told them, that though they could not shake his resolution, their concern and importunity exceedingly distressed him. "What mean you to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." In this short speech we may discern a spirit which is indeed the honour of human nature. Inflexibly firm to his character and duty, yet expressing the most tender feelings for his friends, while he contemplated the severest trials that might affect himself unmoved, he was almost overpowered by what he felt for others. But when they saw that he was not to be dissuaded, they desisted from their suit, and acquiesced in the will of the Lord.

A. D. 60.] Having staid some time at Cæsarea, he proceeded to Jerusalem, his friends, who had crossed the sea with him, resolving to expose themselves to a share of the dangers from which they could not divert him. They were accompanied likewise by an old disciple, named Mnason, of Cyprus, who resided at Jerusalem, and had offered his house for their accommodation. Their arrival was welcome to the brethren; and the next day St. Paul introduced his friends to St. James and the elders, who seem to have met together on purpose to receive him. To them he gave a succinct account of the success with which God had honoured his ministry among the Gentiles; which, when they had heard, they unanimously glorified God on his behalf, and rejoiced to hear of the accession of such numbers to the christian faith, Acts xxi. But at the same time they gave him to understand that the bulk of the Jewish converts had received no small prejudice against him; that there were even many thousands who had heard and believed hard things of him, as one who taught the Jews to apostatize from the law of Moses, and forbade them to practise circumcision, and the other rites and customs of their forefathers. In order to shew them that this charge was groundless, they advised him to join himself publicly with four men who were under a vow, and to attend with them the prescribed course of purification in the temple.

From this passage we are led to remark, that, through the weakness of human nature, the prejudices of education, and the arts of Satan, many thousands of professed christians, in the first and purest period of the primitive church, while under the care of the apostles, had imbibed from hear-say, a degree of coldness and dislike towards one of the Lord's most faithful and most favoured servants. How far the methods St. Paul was advised to pursue, for the removal of this misapprehension, was suited to his character and known integrity, is a question not easily determined. The apostles, considered in one light, as the penmen of a large part of the sacred canon of faith and practice, which the Lord was pleased by them to communicate to his church, were, doubtless, so far under the full direction and inspiration of his Holy Spirit; but we have no reason to believe, that in every part of their own personal conduct they were strictly infallible; nay, we have good warrant to conclude the contrary, as St. Paul himself assures us, that, upon a certain occasion, already mentioned, he withstood Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. It is therefore no way derogatory from the character and authority of St. Paul, to inquire

16. We readily suppose, from the apostle's character, that his first inquiry, upon coming to any place where the gospel had been preached, related to those who loved the Lord Jesus, and how they were to be met with.

* Could many persons now living have seen this, without doubt they would have said, they had seen a strange company of enthusiasts and fanatics.

whether, upon this occasion, the tenderness of his spirit towards weak believers, and his desire of becoming all things to all men, when the foundation-truths of the gospel were not affected, might not carry him too far: for though a reserve was made by James, in favour of the Gentile converts, that they should not be burdened with the observance of Jewish rites; yet the express end and design for which this step was proposed to him, and for which he seems to have undertaken it, was that all might know or believe, not only that he was not against others adhering to the Jewish ceremonies, but that he likewise orderly and statedly practised them himself. A circumstance which is far from being clear, or indeed probable, if we consider the strain of his epistle to the Galatians: which, though the addition at the close of our copies, mentions as sent from Rome, is generally allowed to have been written during his stay at Ephesus at the latest, if not sooner; and further, that, for some time past, his converse had been almost wholly confined to the Gentile believers, or to those churches of which they formed the largest part. If he became as a Jew amongst the Jews, it was, as he says himself (1 Cor. ix. 20.), only with the hope of gaining the Jews: which motive could no longer take place when he had finally withdrawn from their synagogues. Those, therefore, who suppose that, in this instance, he was over-persuaded to deviate from that openness of conduct which he generally maintained, seem to have some ground for their suspicion. This, however, is certain, his temporising did not answer the proposed end; but, instead of rendering him more acceptable, involved him in the greatest danger: for when the seven days were almost fulfilled, some Jews of Asia, seeing him in the temple, pointed him out to the multitude as the dangerous man who had apostatized from his religion, and was using his endeavours, wherever he went, to draw people from the worship of God according to the law of Moses. To this they added, that he had profaned the holy place, by bringing Gentiles with him into the temple. This they conjectured from having seen Trophymus, an Ephesian, with him in the city. This part of the charge was wholly false: he had not brought his Gentile friends into the temple; but he appeared so publicly with them upon other occasions, as to give some room for a surmise of this sort. If he submitted to the proposal of the elders, and attended in the temple himself, for the satisfaction of the Jewish converts, he would not go so far as to be ashamed of his friends, to make himself more acceptable to his enemies. It is our duty to avoid giving just offence; but if we boldly and honestly avow the Lord's people upon all proper occasions, without regard to names and parties, we must expect to suffer from the zealots of all sides.

Those who first laid hands on him were soon assisted by great numbers; for the whole city was moved, and the people ran together from all quarters. They dragged him out of the temple, and were upon the point of killing him, without giving him time or leave to speak a word for himself: they thought him absolutely in their power; but they were prevented by the appearance of Lysias, a Roman officer, who had a post near the temple to prevent or suppress insurrections. Upon the first notice he received of this disturbance, he came down with a party of soldiers. The evangelist observes, that when the Jews ran to kill Paul, the Romans ran to save him. Thus the succour the Lord provides for his people is always proportioned to the case, and effectual to the end. When danger is pressing, relief is speedy. Lysias, though ignorant of the cause of this tumult, judging, by its violence, that the apostle must have been some great malefactor, commanded him to be bound with two chains; and when he could obtain no satisfactory information from the people, had him removed to the castle, or Roman station. But such was the violence of the incensed unmeaning multitude, that the soldiers were constrained to carry him in their arms up the steps, or stairs, which led thither from the temple. Here Paul obtained leave to speak for himself, the tribune inclining rather to a more favourable opinion of him, when he found he could speak Greek; and the people attended with some composure, when they heard him address them in the Hebrew, or Syriac language.

In his discourse (Acts xxii.) he told them, that he had been brought up amongst themselves, and appealing to the high priest and elders concerning the zeal and earnestness with which he had formerly served their party, he related the extraordinary dispensation by which the Lord Jesus had conquered his heart. This was St. Paul's usual method of defence, and though no means are sufficient to reach the heart without a divine influence, yet humanly speaking, a simple and faithful declaration of what God has done for our souls, seems most likely to convince, or at least to soften and silence, those who oppose. Enraged as the Jews had been, they listened with patience to his relation, till he proceeded to intimate the Lord's designs in favour of the Gentiles, and that he was appointed an apostle to them. Accustomed to despise the rest of mankind, and to deem themselves the only people of God, they could not bear this; they interrupted him instantly, and, with one voice, declared it was not fit such a fellow should live upon the earth: they cast off their clothes, threw dust in the air, and their fury seemed to deprive them of their reason. Lysias, the tribune, secured him from their violence, but commanded him to be examined by scourging, that he might know his crime from his

own mouth, according to a barbarous custom of putting those to torture against whom there was no sufficient evidence, that their own extorted confession might furnish some grounds of proceeding against them: a custom still prevalent in most countries called christian, though contrary to religion, to reason, and to the common sentiments of humanity. Our Lord Jesus was examined in this manner before Pilate; and though the apostle was ready to follow the steps of his master in suffering, yet, upon this occasion, he pleaded his right of exemption from such treatment, as being a native of Tarsus, a city honoured with the freedom of Rome. A Roman citizen was not legally liable either to be bound or scourged: therefore, when the tribune understood his privilege, he stopped farther proceedings, and was something apprehensive for himself, that he had in part violated them already, by ordering him to be bound;* but, being still desirous to know what was laid to his charge, he convened the chief priests, and the members of the Sanhedrim on the next day; and brought him again before them.

The apostle, fixing his eyes upon the high-priest and council, as one who was neither ashamed nor afraid to appear at their tribunal, began (Acts xxiii.) with a declaration, that he had lived to that day in the exercise of a good conscience; but Ananias, the high-priest, forgetting his character as a judge, commanded those who stood near to strike him on the face. The apostle severely rebuked his partiality, in perverting the cause of justice, and warned him of the righteous judgment of God, the supreme Judge, who would surely punish his hypocrisy †. His reply to those who reproved him for speaking in such terms to the high-priest, seems to intimate, that the injurious treatment he had received had raised an undue warmth in his spirit, though it may be supposed that he denounced his future doom under a superior and prophetic impulse; but knowing that the council was composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, who were at variance amongst themselves about several weighty points, particularly the doctrine of a resurrection, he declared himself a Pharisee, and that the opposition he met with from the Sadducees, was owing to his belief and hope in that doctrine. The Pharisees immediately suspended their present resentment, to embrace the occasion offered of opposing their old antagonists, and, upon this issue, espoused his cause, declaring him innocent; and said, that if a spirit or angel (the existence of both which the Sadducees denied) had spoken to him, they ought not to fight against God by refusing to hear him. Upon this a great dissention took place, and Lysias, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces between the contending parties, put an end to the conference, and ordered the soldiers to take him by force, and secure him in the castle. It is indeed often well for believers, that the people of the world, though agreed in one point, namely, to oppose the gospel, are divided and subdivided in other respects; so that, for the sake of a favourite passion, or to cross an opposite interest, they will sometimes protect those whom they would otherwise willingly destroy.

The next night he received full amends for all he had suffered, and was confirmed against the utmost efforts of his enemies malice; for the Lord Jesus, whom he served, vouchsafed to appear to him in a vision, commanded him to be of good cheer, owned his gracious acceptance of his late testimony in Jerusalem, and promised that none should hinder him the honour of bearing witness to his truth at Rome likewise. The world has been sometimes surprised at the confidence which the faithful servants of Christ have shewn in the midst of dangers, and in the face of death; but if their supports were known, the wonder would cease. If the Lord speaks, his word is effectual; and when he says, Be of good courage, and fear not! his people, out of weakness, are made strong.

Little were the incredulous Jews aware of what a power and vigilance were engaged in his preservation; and, therefore, impatient of delays, they resolved to destroy him immediately. To manifest their resolution, and to quicken their diligence, more than forty of them bound themselves, under the penalty of the great curse, or anathema, not to eat or drink till they had killed him. They acquainted the priests and rulers with their engagement, and proposed that they should request Lysias to order him once more to appear before them in council, and that then those who had combined in this oath would be ready to assassinate him. But no counsel or device can stand against the Lord! This black design was, by some means, providentially made known to a young man, who was Paul's sister's son, who gave notice of it first to him, and then, by his desire, to Lysias, who, finding the Jews implacably bent against Paul's life, determined to place him farther out of their reach, and accordingly sent him away, that same night, under a strong guard, who conducted him to Cæsarea, and delivered him to Felix the Roman governor, together with a letter from Lysias, importing his care to preserve the prisoner, because he understood him to be a Roman citizen, and that he had commanded his accusers to follow. Thus the conspiracy which his enemies

* A Roman citizen might be bound with a chain, but not tied with thongs, or beaten with rods: "Facinus est vinciere civem Romanum, scelus verberari." Cicero.

† Thou whited wall!—A clay wall, glossed over with white, is an apt emblem of a man who carries on a malicious design under the pretenes and forms of justice. Hateful is the character and dreadfully dangerous the condition of such.

had formed to destroy him, proved the occasion of his deliverance out of their hands.

In about five days afterwards, Ananias the high-priest, with the elders of the council, appeared before Felix against Paul, Acts xxiv. The charge was opened by Tertullus, a venal orator, or advocate, whom they had retained for this purpose. who began with a commendation of the governor, in terms which might have suited the illustrious actions and wise measures of princes studious of the public good, but were ill applied to Felix (who was infamous for his cruelty and oppression), and in the name of the Jews who hated him. But enmity to the gospel will make men stoop to the meanest flattery and servility, if by that means they have hope of gaining their point! The sum of the accusation was, that Paul was an enemy to church and state, a disturber of the established religion, and a mover of sedition against the government; to which was added, as a popular proof of the charge, that he was a ringleader of the sect or heresy of the Nazarenes, so called from Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by a former governor for asserting himself to be a king. Thus much seems implied in the term Nazarene, as the Jews used it. The apostle began his defence with a protestation of his innocence, as to any design of moving sedition or tumult, which he said his enemies were unable to prove by a single fact: he proceeded to inform the governor of the true motives of their enmity against him, and acknowledged that he worshipped God in a way which they stigmatized with the name of heresy or division; for the proper* meaning of heresy is no more than sect or party. By farther declaring, that he worshipped the God of his fathers, and believed all things written in the law and the prophets, he proved from the object and the manner of his worship, that he was not guilty of any blameable innovations; he professed the hope of a resurrection, which his enemies could not but allow, and that it was his constant study† (Acts xxiv. 16.) and endeavour to maintain a conscience void of offence; and, added, that it was not he, but the Jews themselves, who had raised the tumult, by assaulting him, when he was peaceably attending in the temple, according to the prescribed rules. He observed, that his first accusers were not present, as they ought to have been; and challenged any who were within hearing to prove their allegations in any one instance.

Felix, having perhaps a favourable opinion of the christian profession, which had been settled some time at Cæsarea, and being likewise desirous of further information, deferred the full discussion of the affair till the arrival of Lysias, and committed Paul, in the mean time, to the care of a centurion, as a prisoner at large, allowing him to go abroad in the city, and giving his friends liberty to visit him at home. And thus he was providentially delivered from the blood-thirsty Jews, and found an assylum in the Roman power, which they had endeavoured to engage for his destruction.

A. D. 59.] He was sent for not long after, by Felix, and discoursed before him and his wife Drusilla concerning the faith of Christ. Curiosity was the governor's motive; but the apostle, who knew his character, was faithful to him, and would not speak of the faith of Christ only, to one who could not understand it, but made a home application by enlarging on righteousness, temperance, and the important consequences of a future judgment. These were fit topics to press upon an unjust and rapacious governor, who lived in adultery, Drusilla (his reputed wife), having forsaken a lawful husband to live with him. She was by birth a Jewess, daughter of the Herod whose death we have already mentioned; and having renounced her religion and her husband, for Felix, was, by the judgment of God, given up to hardness of heart; so that it does not appear that the apostle's discourse made any impression upon her. It was otherwise with Felix, who, though a wicked man, had sinned against less light: he trembled at what he heard, and, not able to conceal his concern, he cut short the interview, with a promise to send for him again, at a convenient season. So great sometimes is the power of truth, when faithfully enforced! With this only advantage on his side, Paul the prisoner triumphs over a haughty governor, and makes him tremble. Great likewise is the power of sin! Felix trembled at the review of the past, and the prospect of the future; but he could not stop; he found some avocation for his present relief, and put off his most important concerns to a future opportunity, which it is probable never came

* As the apostle only cautions Titus to reject or avoid a heretic, Tit. iii. 10. but has not defined him expressly, many writers and teachers, have had a fair field to exercise their skill or their passions upon the subject; yet the question is far from determined to this day. Some would treat all those as heretics, who differ from them either in judgment or practice; others explain the word quite away, as though the admonition to avoid a heretic, was wholly unnecessary. Perhaps the advice to Titus, is nearly, if not exactly, equivalent to Rom. xvi. 17. The spirit of truth produces unity; the spirit of division is heresy. And the man who fiercely stickles for opinions of his own, who acts contrary to the peaceable, forbearing, humble spirit of the gospel, who affects to form a party, and to be thought considerable in it, is so far a heretic.

† The Greek word (ασκεω) here used, denotes the study, diligence, and proficiency of a person who is desirous to excel and be eminent in any particular art: as a painter, for instance, he searches out the best masters and the best pieces, he studies and copies the beauties of other works, and is continually retouching and improving upon his own; his acquaintance, reflections, and recreations, are all accommodated to his main purpose; and though his pencil is sometimes at rest, his imagination is seldom idle. Similar to this is the exercise of a good conscience formed upon the model of the scriptures, and improved by diligence, meditation, examination, and experience.

He saw and heard Paul afterwards; but the same man had no more the same influence; the accompanying force of the Spirit was withheld; and then he had no farther view in conversing with him, but the hope of receiving money for his enlargement. When the apostle had continued in this situation about two years, Felix was recalled from his government. He had governed the Jews with severity and injustice, and had reason to fear they would accuse him to the emperor; therefore, to ingratiate himself with them, he left Paul in his confinement, thinking that the detention of the person they hated might make them more readily excuse what was past; or at least, he durst not provoke them farther by releasing him.

A. D. 60.] When Festus, who succeeded Felix in the government, went up to Jerusalem (Acts xxv.), the high-priest and elders applied to him, and requested that Paul might be sent thither to be tried before the council; and they appointed proper instruments to assault and murder him in the journey. It seems they expected this favour would be easily granted, as it is usual for governors, at their first coming among a people, to do some popular act; but Festus refused, and commanded them to follow him to Cæsarea, where he himself would judge in the cause. The Jews accordingly exerted themselves in one more effort, and when Festus was returned to Cæsarea, presented themselves before him on an appointed day; and Paul being brought into the court, they accused him heavily, as they had done before, and to as little effect, not being able to prove any thing against him, or to invalidate his protestation that he had committed no offence, either against the law, or the temple, or the Roman government. Festus, who had refused to send him to Jerusalem before, was now willing to oblige them, perceiving the controversy was of a religious kind, and what he had little knowledge of; he therefore asked Paul if he was willing to be tried, in his presence, before the council at Jerusalem. The apostle, who knew what treatment he might expect from the Jews, answered, That he was then at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where he ought to be tried, and that, if found guilty, he was not unwilling to suffer; but that, against the proposal of being delivered up to those who thirsted for his blood, he appealed to Cæsar. This was one privilege of a Roman citizen, that, when he thought himself aggrieved in an inferior court, he might, by entering such an appeal, put a stop to proceedings, and refer the cause to the immediate determination of the emperor. From the example of St. Paul, who counted not his life dear, but was willing, not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus, we learn that it is very allowable for a christian to avail himself of the laws and privileges of his country, when unjustly persecuted for righteousness sake; and perhaps, in some cases, it would be blameable to omit it. Civil liberty is a *depositum* with which we are entrusted for posterity, and, by all lawful means, should be carefully preserved. Festus, after having consulted with his council and lawyers upon this unexpected turn, admitted the appeal, and determined he should be sent to Rome. Paul had long had a desire to visit the believers in that city, and had formed some plans concerning it. But it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. His way was now opened in a manner he had not thought of, but in such a manner as made it more evident that his bonds proved to the furtherance of the gospel.

Soon after this, Agrippa, son of the late Herod, who had large territories, and the title of king, under the Romans, came with his sister Bernice, to congratulate Festus upon his accession to his government: he was a man of a fair character, a professed Jew, but possessed of moderation and prudence. During their stay, Festus informed them of what had lately happened concerning Paul. The whole that he understood of the affair was, that he had not been guilty of any crime, but that his accusers had certain questions against him, of their own superstitions, and concerning one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive. To him the life and the death of Jesus were points of equal indifference; not so to those who believe he died for them, and who expect that, because he lives, they shall live also. This imperfect account made Agrippa desirous to hear Paul himself; and accordingly, the next day, Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, being seated in court,* attended by their officers and train, and a number of the principal people, Paul was once more brought forth to speak in public for himself, Acts xxvi. On this occasion he addressed himself particularly to Agrippa; and, having expressed his satisfaction that he was permitted to speak before one who was so well acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews, he related the cause of his present confinement: he professed his faith and hope in the scriptures; and then, as he had done before, he gave him an account of the extraordinary means by which he had been changed† from a persecutor to a follower of Jesus, in his journey to Damascus. His defence, therefore (as has been formerly observed), was rather experimental than argu-

* The apology St. Paul made for himself was not his trial. He had already stopped all proceedings at law by his appeal to Cæsar; nor was Festus then as a judge upon his tribunal.

† Speaking of his past conduct towards the disciples, he calls it *madness*,—*being exceedingly*, or (as we express it), raging *mad against them*. A man in this state will attack any person he meets; he waits for no provocation, listens to no entreaty, regards no consequences. Thus the apostle judged of himself when a persecutor of the church; and the spirit of persecution in every age has been the same. May God restore those to their right minds who are governed by it!

mentative, and made very different impressions upon his hearers. Festus, who seems to have had a good opinion of his sincerity and intention, yet, supposing no man in his sober senses could believe such a strange story, interrupted him in his narration, and, with an air rather of pity than indignation, said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad."* A similar judgment is passed by too many upon all who profess an acquaintance with the life of faith in an unseen Jesus; but ordinarily, now, the effect is not ascribed to the excess of learning, but to the want of it, as, on the other hand, a man who maintains the wildest absurdities, puts his judgment and understanding to little hazard in the world's esteem, if his chimeras are set off with a competent apparatus of literature. Agrippa, however, was differently affected, especially when Paul made a bold appeal to himself, concerning the notoriety of the facts which had lately happened, and the truth of the prophecies with which they were connected. Here the power of truth triumphed again, and Agrippa was so struck, that, without regarding the numerous assembly, or the displeasure such a declaration might give both to the Jews and Romans, particularly to Festus, who had expressed his sentiment just before, he gave way to the emotions of his mind, and said aloud, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." Yet this was but an involuntary conviction; it did honour to the apostle, but was of no benefit to himself. And the concession, which, at first view, seems to proceed from an ingenuous spirit, when closely examined, amounts but to this, that though Agrippa was indeed convinced of the truth, his heart was so attached to the present evil world, that he had neither courage nor will to follow it; as when we say of a picture, It looks almost alive, we do not mean strictly that there is any more life in the painting than in the canvas on which it is drawn, but only that the resemblance is strong: so the almost christian, however specious in his professions, is still destitute of that living principle which alone can enable him to make them good, and is, in reality, an utter stranger to true christianity. In the graceful return the apostle made to the king's acknowledgment he hinted at this defect, wishing that both Agrippa, and all who heard him, were not only almost, but altogether, as he was himself, with an exception to the chains he wore for the cause of the gospel. This answer discovers, in one view, the confidence he had in his cause, the happy frame of his mind, the engaging turn of his address, and his unbounded benevolence: he could wish nothing better than what he himself felt, to his dearest friends, and he wished nothing worse to his greatest enemies; nay, he wished that his enemies might, if possible, experience all his comforts, without any of his trials When Festus and Agrippa were withdrawn, they agreed, in their opinion, that he had done nothing deserving of death, or even of imprisonment, and that he might have been released, if he had not himself prevented it by appealing to Cæsar.

In consequence of the determination to send him to Rome (Acts xxvii), he was committed to the custody of a centurion named Julius, with whom he embarked in a vessel that was on a trading voyage to several parts of the Lesser Asia. Aristarchus, and some other of his friends, went with him, and particularly the evangelist Luke, who seems to have been the inseparable companion of his travels from the first time he was at Troas. They touched the following day at Sidon, where the centurion gave him liberty to refresh himself and visit his friends. At their next port, Myra in Lycia, a vessel offering which was bound directly for Italy, they went on board her. In the beginning of this passage they were retarded by contrary winds. At length they reached the island of Crete (now called Candia); and having put into a port, called the Fair-havens, Paul would have persuaded them to have staid there, intimating that, as the winter was now advancing, they would meet with many inconveniences and dangers if they ventured to proceed any further. Long voyages were seldom attempted during the winter in those days, or, for many ages after, till the knowledge of the compass made way for those great improvements in navigation which now embolden the mariner to sail indifferently at any season of the year. But it is probable the apostle's precaution was not merely founded upon the obvious disadvantages of the season, but rather upon an extraordinary pre-intimation of what was soon to happen. But his remonstrance was over-ruled, the centurion preferring the judgment of the master of the ship, who thought it best, if possible, to reach another haven at the west end of the island, which was thought to be more commodious and safe than the place Paul proposed. A favourable wind springing from the south, determined their resolve, and they set sail with a good confidence of soon reaching their desired port.

There is little doubt but Paul's case and character had by this time engaged the notice of many of his fellow-passengers in the ship. Upon a superficial inquiry, they would learn, that he was the follower of one Jesus, who had been crucified; that he was esteemed a setter-forth of strange gods, and charged with having disturbed the public peace wherever he came. He probably took frequent occasions

* His answer to Festus is expressed with much accuracy and precision. "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth (*αποφθεγγομαι*) the words of truth and soberness." Madness discovers itself either in the apprehension of a false object, or in the false apprehension of a true one. The things he spoke of were true in themselves, and his ideas of them just and proportionate.

to speak of his Lord and Master to those about him; and as he had several companions, the manner of their social worship could hardly pass unobserved; but no emergency had as yet occurred to manifest the solidity and force of his principles to full advantage, and to make it evident to all with whom he sailed, that his God was far unlike the idols of the Heathens; and that the religion which prompted him to do and suffer so much for the sake of Jesus, was founded, not in the imaginations and inventions of men, but in reality and truth. In prosperous circumstances, most people are easily satisfied with their own principles, and are ready to take it for granted, that even the notions received from no better source than tradition or custom, cannot be wrong, or at least will not be dangerous: but it is in a season of common distress that the truth and efficacy of vital religion appear with the most incontestible authority. The God who alone can deliver when all hope of safety is taken away, and the religion which can inspire a man with confidence and peace, when there is nothing but dismay and confusion around him, will then extort some acknowledgement, even from those who had before thought of them with indifference. From these considerations, we may collect one general reason why the Lord, who, by his divine providence, adjusts the time and circumstances of every event, and without whose permission not a sparrow can fall to the ground, permits his faithful people to be so often exercised with severe trials: it is, to manifest that their hopes are well-grounded; that they have not taken up with words and notions, but have a real and sure support, and can hope and rejoice in God under those pressures which deprive others of all their patience, and all their courage; and, on the other hand, to evince that his power and faithfulness are surely engaged on their behalf; that he puts an honour upon their prayers, is near to help them in the time of trouble, and can deliver them out of their greatest extremities. We are not, then, to wonder that this favoured servant of the Lord, after having endured so many sufferings and hardships upon the land, was exposed, in the course of this voyage, to equal dangers and difficulties upon the sea; for they had not long quitted their last port, before their hopes of gaining a better were blasted: they were overtaken by a sudden and violent storm. The name given it by the historian, Euroclydon, expresses its direction to have been from the eastern quarter, and its energy upon the waves. The tempest irresistibly overpowered the mariners, and rendered their art impracticable and vain: they were compelled to abandon the ship to the direction of the wind, and were hurried away, they knew not where. Mention is made of the difficulty they had to secure the ship's boat, as the only probable means of escaping, if they should be wrecked, which yet, in the event, was wholly useless to them; likewise of their endeavours to strengthen the ship by girding her with ropes, and of their throwing a considerable part of the lading and tackling into the sea. In this distressed situation, expecting every hour to be either swallowed up by the waves, or dashed to pieces against unknown rocks or shores, they continued fourteen days.—When they were almost worn out with hardship and anxiety, and there was no human probability of deliverance, the Lord manifested the care he had of his servants. The seamen had not seen sun or stars for many days; but his eye had been upon Paul and his companions every moment. No one on board could even conjecture into what part of the sea the ship was driven; but the Lord knew, and his angels knew: and now one was commanded to appear, to comfort the apostle, and to give him a word of comfort for all on board. Upon this he addressed the people in the ship, exhorting them to take some food, and to be of good courage; for that the God to whom he belonged, and whom he served, had given him assurance, by an angel, not only of his own safety, but that the lives of all on board should be preserved for his sake; that the ship would be cast upon a certain island; but he fully relied on the promise, that not one of them should be lost. He had been told, that he must stand before Cæsar which was a sufficient earnest of his preservation; for who, or what, can disappoint the purpose of God! Amidst all these threatening appearances, Paul was, in reality, as safe in the storm as Cæsar could be thought upon the throne. And thus all his servants are inviolably preserved by his watchful providence; so that neither elements nor enemies can hurt them, till the work he has appointed them is accomplished.

At length the seamen perceived indications that they were drawing near to land: and when they were driven into a convenient depth of water, they cast anchor, and waited for the approach of day. In this interval the people were encouraged by Paul's advice and example, to eat a hearty meal, by which their strength and spirits were recruited to sustain the fatigue they were yet to undergo. In the morning they saw an island; but knew it not. The mariners, regarding their own safety only, were about to make their escape in the boat; but Paul, informing the soldiers that they could not be saved unless the seamen remained in the ship, they paid so much regard to his judgment as immediatly to cut the ropes by which the boat was fastened, and give her up to the sea.

Their only remaining resource was, to force the ship upon the shore, in a place where landing would be most practicable; and of this the mariners were the most proper judges.

If this island, as is generally supposed, was that which we now call Malta, we know that it is almost environed with rocks. They having therefore discovered an open bay, with a beach of sand or pebbles *, endeavoured to run the ship there; but had the management of this business been left to the soldiers and passengers, who were unexperienced in sea-affairs, they might probably have let her drive at random against the rocks where an escape would, humanly speaking, have been impossible. In this view, we may observe, that the apostle's firm confidence in the promise he had received was connected with a prudent attention to the means in their power, from which the promise received was so far from dispensing them, that it was their chief encouragement to be diligent in employing them. This incident may he applied to points of more general importance: and, if carefully attended to, might have determined or prevented many unnecessary and perplexing disputes concerning the divine decrees, and their influence on the contingencies of human life. What God has appointed shall surely come to pass; but in such a manner, that all the means and secondary causes, by which he has determined to fulfil his designs, shall have their proper place and subserviency. Accordingly, they made the best of their way to the shore: but before they quite reached it, the ship was stopped by a point or bank †, where her fore-part stuck fast, and remained immoveable; but her stern or hinder part, was presently broken by the violence of the surges. In the general confusion, the soldiers, unmindful how much they were indebted to Paul, proposed that all the prisoners should be killed without distinction, lest they should be accountable if any of them escaped; but the centurion, who interested himself in his preservation, rejected the motion, and commanded every one to do what they could for their own safety. Many who could swim cast themselves into the sea; the rest availed themselves of planks and broken pieces of the ship; and the merciful providence of the Lord gave their endeavours success; so that the whole company, consisting of two hundred and seventy-six persons, came safe to land.

The inhabitants (Acts xxviii.), though called barbarians, received and accommodated them with great humanity, and manifested a tenderness too rarely found upon such occasions amongst those who bear the name of christians: they brought them under cover, and kindled fires to warm and dry them. The apostle, who cheerfully suited himself to all circumstances, assisted in supplying the fire with fuel; but having gathered a parcel of sticks, a viper, which was unperceived in the midst of them, fastened itself upon his hand. He had just escaped from storm and shipwreck, and was exposed to as great a danger of another kind. Such is the nature of our present state; and it is a proof of our pride and ignorance, that we are seldom greatly apprehensive for ourselves, but when some formidable appearance is before our eyes. A tempest, pestilence, or earthquake, alarms us, and not without reason; but alas! we are not such mighty creatures, as to have nothing to fear but from such powerful agents: A tyle, a fly, a hair, or a grain of sand, are sufficient instruments, in the hand of God, to remove a king from the throne to the grave, or to cut off the conqueror at the head of his victorious armies. On the other hand, those who serve the Lord, and trust in him, are equally safe under all events; neither storms, nor flood, nor flames, nor the many unthought-of evils which lurk around in the smoothest scenes of life, have permission to hurt them till their race is finished, and then it little signifies by what means they are removed into their Master's joy. The apostle, in the strength of divine faith, shook off the venomous creature into the fire, and remained unmoved and unhurt. The islanders, who saw what had passed, judged at first (from those faint apprehensions of a superior power inflicting punishment on the wicked, which seem to remain in the darkest and most ignorant nations), that he was certainly a murderer, who, though he had escaped the seas, was pursued by vengeance, and marked out for destruction; but when, after expecting for some time to see him drop down dead, they found that he had received no harm, they retracted their censure, and conceived him to be a god, or something more than man. This event probably prepared them to hear him with attention.

The apostle and his friends were courteously entertained three days by Publius, the chief person of the island, who resided near the place of their landing: He requited the kindness of his host, by restoring to health his father, who had been some time ill of a fever and dysentery. In the same manner he laid his hands on many sick persons, who were healed in answer to his prayers. These acceptable services procured him much favour from the inhabitants; and when, after three months stay he was about to depart, they furnished him liberally with necessary provisions for his voyage.

A. D. 61.] They sailed from thence in a ship of Alexandria that had wintered in the island; and stopping three days at Syracuse in Sicily, soon after arrived at Rhegium, and from

* "They discovered a certain creek with a shore." But there was a shore all round the island. Αιγιαλος does not express the sea-coast in general, or a rocky craggy shore, but the skirts of an open bay, convenient for lanching, landing, or drawing a net for fish. See Matth. xiii. 2. 48., John xxi. 4. A mariner who understood Greek would perhaps render the sentence thus: "They observed a certain bay, with a beach." And this they chose as the most likely place to get safe to land.

† Τοπον διθαλασσον is rendered in our version, *a place where two seas met*; but there is nothing answerable to the word *met*. Probably it means what the mariners call a spit, or point of sand running off from the shore and which had a sufficient depth of water on either side.

thence in two days, at Puteoli, near Naples, where they disembarked, and continued a week, at the request of the christians of the place. From Puteoli to Rome their journey lay about one hundred miles by land.

The disciples at Rome having heard of Paul's approach, several of them met him at a place called Appii Forum, and another party at the Three Taverns; the former place being about fifty, and the other thirty miles from the city. At the sight of these believers, whom he had loved unseen, we are told he thanked God, and took courage. Even the apostle Paul, though habitually flaming with zeal and love, was not always in the same frame. We learn from his own account of himself, that he had sometimes sharp exercises of mind; and perhaps this was such a time when his thoughts were much engaged on what awaited him upon his arrival at Rome, and his appearance before the cruel and capricious Nero. The Lord has so constituted his body, the church, that the different members are needful and helpful to each other, and the stronger are often indebted to the weaker. St. Paul himself was revived and animated at this juncture by the sight of those who were in every respect inferior to him; it rejoiced him to see that Christ his Lord was worshipped at Rome also; and being in the presence of those with whom he could open his mind, and freely confer upon the glorious truths that filled his heart, he forgot at once the fatigue he had lately suffered, and the future difficulties he had reason to expect.

Upon their arrival at Rome, the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the proper officer; but Paul had the favour allowed him to live in a house which he hired, under the guard of one soldier. Here he immediately discovered his usual activity of spirit in his Master's cause; and, without losing time, sent on the third day for the principal persons of the Jews (according to his general custom of making the first declarations of the gospel to them), and acquainted them with the cause of his prosecution and appeal; he assured them, that he had no intention, in vindicating himself, to lay any thing to the charge of his own people; adding, that, not for any singularities of his own, or for any offence against the law of Moses, but for the hope of Israel, he was bound with the chain* he then wore. They answered, that they had received no information concerning him from Judea; but that they understood the sect to which he professed an attachment was every where spoken against; they therefore desired to hear his sentiments, and appointed a day for the purpose, when many of them came to him, and he spent the whole day, from morning till evening, in proving, confirming, and explaining, the nature and necessity of the gospel and kingdom of Christ, from the books of Moses and the prophets. His discourse had good effect upon some, but others believed not, and they departed with considerable disagreement among themselves; the apostle taking leave of them with that solemn warning, which our Lord had often used in the course of his ministry from the prophecy of Isaiah (chap. i. 9, 10), denouncing incurable and judicial blindness and hardness of heart upon those who wilfully rejected the proposal of the truth.

He remained a prisoner in his own hired house for the space of two years, having an unrestrained liberty to receive all who came to him, and to preach the glad tidings of salvation by Christ; which we learn from his epistles (Philip. i. 12) he did with so much success, that his imprisonment evidently contributed to the furtherance of the gospel, enlarged the number of believers, and animated the zeal and confidence of those who had already received faith and grace.

A. D. 63.] The history of St. Luke ends here, which I have followed more closely than I at first designed, partly because the facts he has recorded suggests many reflections which have more or less a reference to our main design, and partly from a reluctance to leave the only sure and incontestible history by which our researches into the establishment and state of the primitive church can be guided; for though some monuments of the early ages of christianity, which are still extant, have a great share of merit, and will afford us materials to make good our plan, yet they must be selected with caution, for it would be a want of ingenuousness not to acknowledge, that there are great mixtures and blemishes to be found in the writings of those who lived nearest to the apostles times; and in the most ancient historical remains several things have a place, which shew, that a spirit of credulity and superstition had very early and extensive influence; the evident traces of which have given too fair an occasion to some persons of more learning than candour, to attempt to bring the whole of those records into disrepute. But where the characteristic genius and native tendency of the gospel are rightly understood, and carefully attended to, a mind, not under the power of bias and prejudice, will be furnished with sufficient *data*, whereby to distinguish what is genuine and worthy of credit from the spurious and uncertain additions which have been incautiously received.

I shall be brief in deducing our history from this period to the close of the first century. St. Paul, after more than two years confinement at Rome, having not yet finished his appointed measure of service, was providen-

* Among the Romans, the prisoner was always chained to the soldier or soldiers who guarded him. St. Paul speaks of his chain both to friends and enemies, with an indifference that shews how well content he was to wear it for his Master's sake. See Ephes. vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 16.

tially preserved from the designs of all his enemies, and set at liberty. We are told by some, that in pursuance of the design he had long before expressed, he went into Spain, and from thence to Gaul, now called France; nor have endeavours been wanting to prove, that he preached the gospel even in the British isles. That he, at some time, accomplished his desire of visiting Spain, is not improbable; but we have no certain evidence that he did so: much less is there any ground for supposing that he was either in France or Britain. From his own writings, however, we have good reason to believe, that, upon his dismission from Rome, he revisited the churches of Syria, and some other parts of Asia; for, in his epistle to the Hebrews, he mentions his purpose of seeing them, in company with his beloved Timothy; and writing to Philemon, who lived at Colosse, he requests him to prepare him a lodging, for that he hoped to be with him shortly. And it was probably in this progress that he preached in Crete, and committed the churches he gathered there to the care of Titus; for we have no account in the Acts, of his having visited that island before, except the little time he touched there in his passage to Rome, which seems not to have been sufficient for so great a work. How he was employed afterwards we know not; but it is generally agreed, that, towards the latter part of Nero's reign, he returned to Rome, and there received the crown of martyrdom.

In the accounts preserved of the rest of the apostles, we likewise meet with great uncertainty; nor can any thing be determined to satisfaction, concerning either the seat of their labours, or the time or manner of their deaths. I shall therefore wave a detail of what is not supported by sufficient proof. I only observe concerning St. Peter, that the assertion of his having been bishop of Rome, on which (and not on the true rock) the whole system of the Papacy is built, is not only inconsistent with what is recorded of him in the Acts, and the silence of St. Paul concerning him, in the epistles he wrote from thence, but is so far without foundation in ecclesiastical history, that it still remains a point of dubious controversy, whether he ever saw Rome in his life: if he did, it was probably towards the close of it; and the most received opinion is, that he suffered martyrdom there at the same time with St. Paul; that Peter was crucified, and that Paul had the favour of being beheaded, in consideration that he was a Roman citizen.

The christians, though generally despised, and often insulted for their profession, had not hitherto been subject to a direct and capital persecution; but Nero, who, intoxicated with power, had, in a few years, arrived at a pitch of wickedness and cruelty till then unheard of, at length directed his rage against the servants of Christ.

A. D. 64.] In his tenth year the city of Rome was set on fire, and a very considerable part of it consumed. This calamity was generally imputed to him as the author, and it seems not without justice. Mischief, and the misery of others, were the study of his life; and he is reported to have expressed great pleasure at the spectacle, and to have sung the burning of Troy while Rome was in flames. Though he afterwards did many popular things, and spared no expense in relieving the people and rebuilding the city, he could not clear himself from the suspicion of the fact, any otherwise than by charging it upon the christians. The heathen historian Tacitus, in his account of this event, enables us so well to judge of the character which the christians bore in his time, that I shall subjoin a translation of it for the information of the unlearned.

"But neither the emperor's donations, nor the atonements offered to the gods, could remove the scandal of this report; but it was still believed that the city had been burnt by his instigation. Nero, therefore, to put a stop to the rumour, charged the fact, and inflicted the severest punishment for it upon the christians, as they were commonly called, a people detestable for their crimes. The author of this sect was Christ; who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by Pontius Pilate. The destructive superstition, which was by this means suppressed for the present, soon broke out again, and not only overspread Judea, where it first arose, but reached even to Rome, where all abominations, from every quarter, are sure to meet and to find acceptance. Some who confessed themselves christians were first apprehended, and a vast multitude afterwards, upon their impeachment, who were condemned, not so much for burning the city, as for being the objects of universal hatred. Their sufferings and torments were heightened by mockery and derision. Some were inclosed in the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn in pieces by dogs; others were crucified; and others, being covered with inflammable matter, were lighted up as torches at the close of day. These spectacles were exhibited in Nero's gardens, where he held a kind of Circensian shew, either mixing with the populace in the habit of a charioteer, or himself contending in the race. Hence it came to pass, that, criminal and undeserving of mercy as they were, yet they were pitied, as being destroyed merely to gratify his savage and cruel disposition, and not with any view to the public good."

From this quotation it appears that the christians were considered by the heathens as a sect that had been almost crushed by the death of their Master, but suddenly recovered

strength, and spread far and near soon afterwards; that they were so extremely odious, on account of the supposed absurdity and wickedness of their principles, as to be thought capable of committing the worst crimes, when no sufficient proof could be found of their having committed any; that they were treated as the professed enemies of mankind, and therefore, upon the first occasion that offered, were promiscuously destroyed, with the most unrelenting cruelty; that they did not suffer as common malefactors, who, when under the actual punishment of their crimes, are usually beheld with some commiseration, but that insult and derision were added to the most exquisite inventions of torture; and, lastly, that, if these violent proceedings were blamed by any, it proceeded rather from the hatred they bore to Nero, than from a suspicion that the christians met with any thing more than their just desert. These things are carefully to be observed, if we would form a right judgment of the primitive church. It is possible many persons suppose that St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians were (like the pastoral letters of bishops in our own times) addressed to the bulk of the inhabitants in those places; but the case was far otherwise. The Romans, to whom St. Paul wrote, were inconsiderable for their number, most of them contemptible in the sight of the world on account of their poverty and low rank in life, and (as the above extract from Tacitus proves) the objects of public detestation, for their attachment to the name and doctrines of Jesus.

Whether this persecution was confined to Rome, or carried on by public authority through all the provinces where christians were to be found, is not absolutely certain, though the latter seems most probable; for it is hardly to be supposed that Nero would rage against them in the capital, and suffer them to live in peace everywhere else. Tertullian expressly asserts that Nero enjoined their destruction by public edicts in the several provinces; and his testimony seems worthy of credit, as he mentions it in his Apology, which, though written more than a century afterwards, was not at so great a distance of time but he might easily have been contradicted, if he had advanced an untruth. Besides, the example of Nero, without his express injunctions, seems to have been sufficient to awaken persecution against a people so generally hated as the christians were. Multitudes upon this occasion had the honour to seal their profession with their blood; but the cause for which they suffered triumphed over all opposition, and the martyrs places in the church were supplied by an accession of fresh converts.

This storm, though sharp, was not of very long continuance; it terminated with the life of Nero, who was compelled, though with extreme reluctance, to destroy himself with his own hands, that he might escape the most ignominious punishment, he having been, by a decree of the senate, justly and solemnly branded with the character which malice and ignorance would have fixed upon the christian name, and condemned to be whipped to death as an enemy of the human race.

A. D. 68, 69.] After him, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were successively acknowledged emperors; but their reigns were short, and their deaths violent. The Jewish war, which ended in the final catastrophe and dispersion of that nation, was at this time carried on under the command of Vespasian, who, while engaged in that service, was saluted emperor by his army.

A. D. 70.] Upon this, leaving the conduct of the war to his son Titus, he returned to Italy, and, soon after the death of Vitellius, was peaceably established in the government. Titus having a secret commission from God (whom he knew not), to execute his fierce displeasure against the Jews, upon whom wrath was now come to the uttermost, after destroying the whole country of Judea with fire and sword, laid siege to Jerusalem; and, having taken it at the end of five months, with an incredible slaughter of the Jews, and the destruction of the temple, he burnt the city and pulled down the very walls. More than a million of people, who had trusted in lying words, and boasted themselves of an empty profession, perished in this war; and those who survived were reduced to slavery, sold and dispersed into all parts, at the will of the conquerors. Thus ended the Jewish economy; and the law of Moses having received the accomplishment of all its types, ceremonies, and precepts, in the person, life, and death of Jesus the Messiah, was irrevocably abrogated as to its observance, which was rendered utterly impracticable, by the destruction of the temple, and the cessation of the priesthood.

A. D. 79.] Under Vespasian, and Titus, who succeeded him, the christian church enjoyed considerable peace and liberty, though upon many occasions they suffered from the ill-will of their adversaries. Few, however, were put to death publicly and professedly for their religion, till Domitian, who came to the empire after his brother Titus [A. D. 81], and who too much resembled Nero in his temper and conduct, imitated him likewise in his employing his power against the followers of Christ. [A. D. 94.] Several are mentioned in history, who suffered in his time; but as little of moment, or that can be fully depended on, is recorded concerning them, I wave a recital of bare names. It is generally believed that St. John was banished to the isle of Patmos by this emperor, where he wrote his Epistles to the churches of Asia, and the Revelation of future events which he had received from the Lord. Some there are who

place these events much earlier, under the reign of Claudius; but the former opinion seems most probable, and best supported by the testimony of the ancients. But the story of his having been cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, in the presence (as some add) of the Roman senate, does not seem supported by any tolerable evidence. It is believed that he gained his liberty from banishment, and returned to Ephesus or the neighbouring parts; that he afterwards wrote his Gospel a little before his death, which is supposed to have happened about the last year of the century. If so, he was probably about a hundred years of age, and survived the rest of the apostles a considerable space.

Domitian, having made the earth groan under his cruelties and excesses was assassinated in the sixteenth year of his reign. [A. D. 96.] Nerva succeeded (a man of much fairer character), who repealed the sanguinary edicts of his predecessor; and it does not appear that the christians were generally persecuted during his short government. Before his death (for he did not live two years), he adopted Trajan for his successor, who came to the empire [A. D. 98.] with a general approbation, and is still reputed one of the best and wisest princes that Rome was favoured with. From his conduct and that of some of the following emperors, it appears, that the gospel of Christ was not only hated by such persons as Nero and Domitian, who seemed professed enemies to every thing that was good and praise-worthy, but that men who desired to be thought the patrons of virtue, and to act upon the most benevolent principles, had objections equally strong against it; for if Trajan did not issue edicts expressly against the christians, there was a very sharp persecution carried on against them in his reign; and when Pliny (in an epistle still extant) represented to him the greatness of their sufferings, and the multitude and innocence of the sufferers, the emperor interposed no farther by his answer, than to forbid informations against them, upon suspicion, to be encouraged, but directed, that such as were proved to be christians, and refused to join in the Heathen sacrifices, should suffer death: and when he visited Asia, Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch, being brought before him, he condemned him, with his own mouth, to be sent to Rome to be devoured by wild beasts. But we shall resume the account of what happened under his reign hereafter, his second or third year [A. D. 100] coinciding, according to the generally-received computation, with the end of the first century, which I have fixed as the limit of our researches in the present volume.*

But before I conclude the chapter, it may be useful to inquire, what might be the motives which influenced the Heathens so eagerly to embrace every occasion of shewing their displeasure against the professors of christianity.

The original and proper cause of the injurious treatment the first christians met with from the heathens, and particularly from the Roman government which usually tolerated every kind of religious worship that did not interfere with the public tranquillity and the obedience due to the state, was one that is of an abiding and universal influence, namely, that enmity of the carnal heart, which cannot be brought to submit to the wisdom and will of God. This has been the secret source of all the persecution which has been the lot of the true disciples of Christ in every age. The sublime doctrines of the gospel were offensive to the pretended wisdom of men, and the spirituality of its precepts no less thwarted their passions. Men, if only left to themselves, cannot but oppose a system, which, at the same time, that it reduces all their boasted distinctions of character to a perfect level, in point of acceptance with God, enjoins a life and conversation absolutely inconsistent with the customs and pursuits which universally prevail, and brands many of the most allowed and authorised practices with the hard names of wickedness and folly. But they are no left to themselves, but are in a degree they are little aware of, under the influence of Satan, who, for the power he maintains and exerts over them, is styled in scripture, the God of this World. Since their own evil dispositions are thus instigated by the great enemy of God and goodness, it is entirely owing to the powerful restraints of the providence of the Most High, that his servants can, at any time, or in any place, enjoy an interval of rest; and though he has always made good his promise in favour of his church, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: though they who oppose it, successively perish, and leave their schemes unfinished, while the interest against which they rage, triumphs over all their attacks, and subsists, revives, and flourishes, amidst the changes which sweep away almost the remembrance of the most prosperous human establishments; yet he is pleased, for wise reasons, to permit them to try what they can do. Hereby the faith and patience of his people are strengthened and displayed, his care over them illustrated, and those who are sincerely devoted to him are evidently distinguished from hypocrites and pretenders, who join in an outward attachment to his gospel in times of prosperity, but are presently wearied and disgusted when storms and troubles arise.

Amongst the more particular reasons why Christianity was obnoxious to the Heathens, not only to persons of vile character, as Nero, but to such as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, who are, even to this day, highly extolled for their probity and discernment, we may mention these that follow: and more than one of them may be easily accommodated to similar

* See Introduction, note.

events, which stand upon the records of history down to our own times; and their effect will probably be felt by many who are yet unborn.

1. The doctrine of the cross was, and perhaps always will be, the capital offence. The christians professed to place all their hopes on the actions and sufferings of one, who died, to all appearance, like a common malefactor. This, considered in one view, was thought such a kind and degree of infatuation, as provoked the most sovereign and universal contempt; and, in another view, it raised a grave concern for the interests of morality and virtue, in those whose pride was flattered by their own empty declamations on those sounding topics. Every thing that was evil, they thought, might be expected from men who openly declared, that they hoped for eternal happiness, not for their own works, which in this connection they depreciated and renounced, but on account of the righteousness and mediation of another. If it was possible that christians could maintain that course of conduct which the gospel requires, and, at the same time, conceal the principles and motives on which they act, they might perhaps come off more easily with the world; for the justice, temperance, goodness, and truth, which become their high calling, are suited to conciliate peace with all men. But their principles must not, cannot, be concealed. Those who know and love Jesus, and are sensible of their immense obligations to him, will glory in him, and in him only; they will avow, that it is not by their own power or holiness that they escape the pollutions of the world, but that they derive all their strength from faith in his blood, and from the supports of his grace. They dare not conceal this, nor do they desire it, though they are sensible that the world, whether it bears the name of Heathen or Christian, will hate and despise them for it.

2. The Romans, though attached to their old system of idolatry, were not averse to the admission of new divinities, upon the ground of what a modern writer calls a spirit of intercommunity; that is, every one had a liberty to adopt what worship he pleased, provided due honour was given to the ancient establishments. The votaries of the Egyptian, Roman, and Syrian deities, while they paid some peculiar regard to their own favourites, indulged each other in a mutual acknowledgment of the rest: but the religion of Jesus was absolutely incompatible with them all, would admit of no competition; and his followers could not avoid declaring, upon all occasions, that they were no gods that were made with hands. On this account they were considered as a most uncharitable, proud, and narrow-hearted sect, as the Jews, for the same reason, had been before them. And thus it will always be. Nothing will more effectually secure a man in the peaceful possession of his own errors, than his pleading for the indifference of error in general, and allowing those who most widely differ from him to be all right in their own way; and this lukewarm comprehension, which is a principal part of that pretended candour and charity for which our own times are so remarkable, preserves a sort of intercourse or confederacy amongst multitudes, who are hardly agreed in any one thing but their joint opposition to the spirit and design of the gospel. But they who love the truth cannot but declare against every deviation from it; they are obliged to decline the proposed intercommunity, and to vindicate the commands and institutions of God from the inventions and traditions of men: they not only build for themselves upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion, but they are free to profess their belief, that other foundation can no man lay; that there is no other name given under heaven by which a sinner can be saved; and that none can have an interest in this name but by that faith which purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world; therefore they always have been, and always will be, hated, as uncharitable and censorious, and are sure to be treated accordingly, so far as opportunity and circumstances will permit those, who think themselves aggrieved, to discover their resentment.

3. The wisest and most respectable characters among the Heathen rulers, either for reasons of state, or from their own superstition, were generally the most solicitous to preserve the old religion from innovations. The history of mankind furnishes us with frequent proofs, that persons, in other respects of the greatest penetration and genius, have often been as blindly devoted to the absurdities of a false religion as the weakest among the vulgar; or, if they have seen the folly of many things that have the sanctions of antiquity and custom; yet the maxims of a false policy, and that supposed connection and alliance between the established religion and the welfare of the state, which has been instilled into them from their infancy, induce them to think it their interest, if not their duty, to keep up the same exterior, and to leave things as they found them. Trajan seems to have been influenced by these considerations; he was zealous for the Heathen system, in which he had been educated, and regarded it, as the Romans were accustomed to do, as the basis, or at least the chief security, of the government. The christians, therefore, were to be punished, not only for their obstinacy in maintaining their own opinions, but as being eventually enemies to the state; for though their conduct was peaceable, and they paid a cheerful obedience to laws and governors, while they did not interfere with that obedience they owed to Christ, their supreme Lord, yet their doctrines, which struck at the very

root of idolatry, made them accounted dangerous to society, and deserving to be exterminated from it.

4. These suspicions were strengthened by the great success and spread the gospel obtained in this first century: within the compass of a few years, it had extended to almost every part of the Roman empire. In this view it appeared formidable, and called for a speedy and vigorous suppression before it should become quite insuperable, by the accession of fresh strength and numbers. But the event did not answer their expectation: believers grew and multiplied, in defiance of all the cruelties exercised upon them; the numbers and constancy of the sufferers, and the gentle spirit of meekness, forgiveness, and love, which they discovered, often made lasting impressions upon the people, sometimes upon their tormentors and judges; and, by the blessing of God upon their doctrine, thus powerfully recommended by their conduct, and sealed by their blood, new converts were continually added to the church.

5. When it was thus determined to extirpate, if possible, these odious and dangerous people, pretexts and occasions were always ready: slanderous reports concerning their tenets and assemblies were industriously promoted, and willingly believed. Some of these took their rise from misapprehension; some were probably invented by those who apostatized from the church, who, to justify themselves, as well as to evince their sincerity, pretended to make discoveries of horrid evils that prevailed amongst them, under the disguise of religion. Many, who would not have invented such stories themselves, were, however, well pleased to circulate what they had heard, and took it for granted, that every thing was true, which confirmed the opinion they had before entertained of this pestilential and despicable sect. But neither violence nor calumny could prevail against the cause and people of God and his Christ. They were supported by an almighty arm: and though many had the honour to lay down their lives in this glorious cause, many more were preserved, by his providence, in the most dangerous circumstances.

The gospel of Christ, though contradictory to the received opinions, laws, customs, and pursuits, of every place where it appeared, though unsupported either by arts or arms, though opposed by power and policy on every side, in a space of about sixty-six years from our Lord's ascension, according to the promise he gave his disciples, had spread successively from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth. Christians were to be found in every province where the Roman power ruled, and in most of their principal cities; and though not many noble, mighty, or wise, were called, yet some there were; and the power of the grace of Jesus was displayed in every rank of life. Courtiers, senators, and commanders, notwithstanding the difficulty of their situation, were not ashamed of his cross; and some of the learned obtained that peace and happiness, by embracing his gospel, which they had sought to no purpose in the vain intricacies of a false philosophy. Nor was the success of the gospel confined within the limits of the Roman empire, but extended eastward to Parthia and Babylon, where the Roman eagles were not acknowledged. We are not sure, however, that there were many collected societies of christians in every province, or that those societies were in general very numerous. Those parts of Asia and Greece which had been the scene of St. Paul's labours, seem to have had the greatest number of settled churches, in proportion to their extent; and their largest assemblies were probably in their principal cities, such as Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. But we have reason to believe, from our Lord's own declarations, that real christians, in the most flourishing times of the church, have been very few, in comparison with the many who choose the broad and beaten road which leads to destruction (Matth. vii. 13, 14.): but these few are under his conduct and blessing, as the salt of the earth, and are therefore scattered far and wide, according to the disposal of his wise providence, who appoints the time of their birth, and the bounds of their habitation.

If by the epithet primitive we mean that period during which the professed churches of Christ preserved their faith and practice remarkably pure, and uninfluenced by the spirit and maxims of the world, we cannot extend it far beyond the first century. We are sure that a mournful declension prevailed very early, and quickly spread, like a contagion, far and wide; and, indeed, the seeds of those evils which afterwards produced such a plentiful harvest of scandals and mischiefs, were already sown, and began to spring up, while the apostles were yet living. And we shall shew hereafter, that the first and purest age of the church was not free from such blemishes as have been observable in all succeeding revivals of true religion. These things are to be guarded against with the utmost attention; but they will more or less appear while human nature continues in its present state of infirmity. While the professors of christianity were few in comparison of their opponents, while they were chiefly poor and obscure persons, and had sharp persecutions to grapple with, so long they preserved the integrity and purity of their profession in general; and the disorders which appeared among them were faithfully and successfully opposed and corrected; afflictions and sufferings kept them firmly united in a love to the truth, and to each other: but when they were favoured with intervals of peace, and the increase of numbers and riches seemed to

give them a more fixed establishment in the world, they were soon corrupted; and that beautiful simplicity which is the characteristic of genuine christianity, was obscured by will-worship and vain reasonings. Amongst the multitudes who abandoned idolatry, and embraced the christian faith, there were several who had borne the specious name of philosophers. Some of these, on the one hand, laboured to retain as many of their favourite sentiments as they could by any means reconcile to the views they had formed of the gospel; and, on the other hand, they endeavoured, if possible, to accommodate the christian scheme to the taste and prejudices of the times, in hopes thereby to make it more generally acceptable. Thus the doctrines of the scriptures were adulterated by those within the church, and misrepresented to those without. Perhaps the first alterations of this kind were not attempted with a bad intention, or extended to the most important points; but the precedent was dangerous; for the progress of error, like that of sin, is from small beginnings to awful and unthought-of consequences. Gospel-truth, like a bank opposed to a torrent, must be preserved entire, to be useful; if a breach is once made, though it may seem at first to be small, none but he who says to the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, can set bounds to the threatening inundation that will quickly follow. In effect, a very considerable deviation from the plan of the apostles had taken place in the churches before the decease of some who had personally conversed with them.

We have no ecclesiastical book of this age extant worthy of notice, except that called, the first of the two epistles to the Corinthians, which are ascribed to Clement bishop of Rome, who is supposed to be the Clement mentioned by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans. This epistle is not unsuitable to the character of the time when it was written, and contains many useful things; yet it is not, as we have it, free from fault, and at the best deserves no higher commendation, than as a pious well-meant performance: it stands first, both in point of time and merit, in the list of those writings which bear the name of the apostolical fathers; for the rest of them, if the genuine productions of the persons whose names they bear, were composed in the second century: for as to the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, St. Paul's companion, those who are strangers to the arguments by which many learned men have demonstrated it to be spurious, may be convinced, only by reading it, if they are in any measure acquainted with the true spirit of the apostle's writings. We are indeed assured, that both the epistles of Clement, this which bears the name of Barnabas, several said to have been written by Ignatius, the authenticity of which has likewise been disputed, one by Polycarp, and the book called the Shepherd of Hermas, which is filled with visionary fables, were all in high esteem in the first ages of the church were read in their public assemblies, and considered as little inferior to the canonical writings; which may be pleaded as one proof of what I have advanced concerning that declension of spiritual taste and discernment which soon prevailed: for I think I may venture to say, there are few, if any of the protestant churches, but have furnished authors whose writings (I mean the writings of some one author) have far surpassed all the apostolical fathers taken together; and that not only in point of method and accuracy, but in scriptural knowledge, solid judgment, and a just application of evangelical doctrine to the purposes of edification and obedience.

But though the first christians were men subject to passions and infirmities, like ourselves, and were far from deserving, or desiring that distinguishing admiration, and implicit submission, to all their sentiments, which were paid them by the ignorance and superstition of after times; yet they were eminent for faith, love, self-denial, and a just contempt of the world; multitudes of them cheerfully witnessed to the truth with their blood, and, by their steadfastness and patience, under trials, and their harmony among themselves often extorted honourable testimonies, even from their opposers. Could they have transmitted their spirit, together with their name, to succeeding generations, the face of ecclesiastical history would have been very different from what it now bears; but, by degrees, the love of novelty, and the thirst of power, a relaxed attention to the precepts of Christ, and an undue regard to the names, authority, and pretensions of men, introduced those confusions, contentions, and enormities, which at length issued in an almost universal apostacy from that faith and course of practice which alone are worthy the name of christianity. The prosecution of this subject, more especially with a view to the history of the favoured few who were preserved from the general contagion, and of the treatment they met with, who had the courage to censure or withstand the abuses of the times they lived in, will be attempted in the following volumes of this work *, if God, in whose hands our times are, is pleased to afford opportunity, and if the specimen presented to the public, in this volume should so far meet the approbation of competent judges, as to encourage the author to proceed.

Some particulars which may conduce to render the state of the church in the first century more evident to the reader, as well as to give light into the true state of religion amongst ourselves, and which could not be well introduced in the course of our narration, without making too frequent and too

* See Introduction, note.

long digressions, I have, for that reason, treated of separately in the chapters that follow

CHAP. II.

AN ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER OF ST. PAUL, CONSIDERED AS AN EXEMPLAR OR PATTERN OF A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE success with which the first promulgation of the gospel was attended, is to be ultimately ascribed to the blessing and operation of the Holy Spirit; and the great means which the Spirit of God is pleased to accompany with an efficacious power upon the souls of men, is the subject-matter of the gospel itself. He concurs with no other doctrine but that of the scripture. The most laboured endeavours to produce a moral change of heart and conduct, will always prove ineffectual, unless accommodated to the principles of revelation respecting the ruin of human nature by sin, and the only possible method of its recovery by Jesus Christ.

And as the Holy Spirit bears witness to no other doctrine, so he ordinarily restrains his blessing to those ministers who have themselves experienced the power of the truths which they deliver to others. A man may be systematically right, and strenuous in the delivery and defence of orthodox notions; yet if he is not in some degree possessed of the dispositions and motives which become a minister of the New Testament, he will seldom be honoured with much success or acceptance: the want of that disinterested and dependent frame of mind which the gospel inculcates on all who profess it, will render his labours insignificant; for the Holy Spirit, on whose influence success entirely depends, will seldom co-operate with any but those who are sincerely governed by his precepts.

A great stress therefore is laid in the New Testament, upon the principles, tempers, and conduct, which ought to distinguish the men who have the honour to be intrusted with the important charge of preaching the gospel of Christ. To delineate their proper character, and to form their manners suitable to their high calling, is the principal scope of the epistles to Timothy and Titus: and when we consider what we read there, in connection with many passages to the same purpose, which occur occasionally in the inspired writings, we may well adopt the apostle's words, "Who is sufficient for these things?" A christian, even in private life, is exposed to innumerable snares and dangers, from his situation in an evil world, the power and subtlety of his spiritual enemies, and the influence of the body of sin in himself, which, though weakened and despoiled of dominion, is not yet destroyed. A minister of the gospel, besides these trials in common with other christians, has many peculiar to himself: His services are more difficult, his temptations more various, his conduct more noticed; many eyes are upon him, —some enviously watching for his halting, and some perhaps too readily proposing him as a pattern, and content to adopt whatever has the sanction of his example: if encouraged and acceptable, he is in danger of being greatly hurt by popularity and the favour of friends; if opposed and ill-treated (and this he must expect in some instances if he is faithful), he is liable either to be surprised into anger and impatience, or to sink into dejection and fear. It is therefore a great encouragement to find from scripture (and not from scripture only), how the grace of God has enabled others, in equal circumstances of danger and temptation, to rise superior to all impediments, and to maintain such a course of conduct, that they stand proposed as proper patterns for our imitation, and call upon us to be followers of them, as they were of Christ.

Amongst these the character of St. Paul shines with a superior lustre; he stands distinguished by the eminence of his knowledge, grace, labours, and success, as a noble and animating exemplar of a minister of Jesus Christ. And if it should be thought a digression from the design of an Ecclesiastical History, to allot a few pages to the consideration of his principles, and the uniform tenor of his life, yet I hope the digression will not be unprofitable in itself, or judged unsuitable to my general plan; for I proposed not to confine myself to a dry detail of facts, but to point out the genuine tendency of the gospel where it is truly received, and the spirit by which it is opposed, and to shew the impossibility of reviving practical godliness by any other means than those which were so signally successful in the first age of the church.

Were I to exhibit any recent character with these views, the exceptions of partiality and prejudice would not be so easily obviated; the merits of such a character, however commendable upon the whole, would be objected to, and the incidental infirmities and indiscretions of the person (for the best are not wholly free from blemish) would be studiously collected and exaggerated as a sufficient contrast to all that could be said in his praise. But modesty forbids the same open disingenuous treatment of one who was an apostle of Christ: besides, he lived, and died long ago: and as some learned men have found, or pretended to find, a way to reconcile his writings with the prevailing taste of the times, he is commended in general terms, and claimed as a patron by all parties of the religious world; therefore I am warranted to take it for granted, that none who profess the name of Christians will be angry with me for attempting to place his spirit and conduct in as full a light as I can, or for proposing him as a proper criterion, whereby to judge of the

merits and pretensions of all who account themselves ministers of Christ.

Many things worthy our notice and imitation have occurred concerning this apostle, whilst we were tracing that part of his history which St. Luke has given us in the Acts; but I would now attempt a more exact delineation of character, as it is farther exemplified in his own epistles, or may be illustrated from a review of what has been occasionally mentioned before.

We may observe much of the wisdom of God in disposing the circumstances in which his people are placed previous to their conversion: they only begin to know him when he is pleased to reveal himself to them by his grace; but he knew them long before: he determines the hour of their birth, their situation in life, and their earliest connections: he watches over their childhood and youth, and preserves them from innumerable evils and dangers into which their follies, while in a state of ignorance and sin, might plunge them; and he permits their inclinations to take such a course, that, when he is pleased to call them to the knowledge of his truth, many consequences of their past conduct, and the reflections they make upon them, may concur, upon the whole, in a subserviency to fit them for the services into which he designs to lead them afterwards. Thus he leads the blind by a way that they knew not, and often for the manifestation of his wisdom, power and grace, in bringing good out of evil, he, for a season, gives them up so far to the effects of their own depravity, that, in the judgment of men, none seem more unlikely to be the subjects of his grace, than some of those whom he has purposed not only to save from ruin, but to make instrumental to the salvation of others. I doubt not but some of my readers, who are acquainted with their own hearts, will easily apply this observation to themselves; but there are instances in which the contrast is so striking and strong, that it will be made for them by those who know them. It is, however, peculiarly exemplified in the case of St. Paul: he was set apart from the womb, as he himself tells us (Gal. i. 15), to be a chosen instrument of preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. The frame of his heart, and the manner of his life, the profession he had made, and the services in which he was engaged before his conversion, were evidently suited to render him an unsuspected, as well as a zealous witness to the truth and power of the gospel, after he had embraced it. The Lord's purpose was to shew the insufficiency of all legal appointments and human attainments, the power of his grace in subduing the strongest prejudices, and the riches of his mercy in pardoning the most violent attempts against his gospel. We know not how this purpose could have been more effectually answered, in a single instance, than by making choice of our apostle, who had been possessed of every advantage that can be imagined exclusive of the gospel, and, in consequence of these advantages, had made the most pertinacious efforts to suppress it: he was born a Jew, bred up under Gamaliel, a chief of the Pharisees (Phil. iii.), the sect which professed the most peculiar attachment to the law of Moses: his conduct before he became a christian was undoubtedly moral, if we understand morality in that lean and confined sense which it too frequently bears among ourselves, as signifying no more than an exemption from gross vices, together with a round of outward duties performed in a mercenary, servile spirit, to soothe conscience, and purchase the favour of God. While he was thus busied in observing the letter of the law, he tells us, he was alive,—that is, he pleased himself in his own attainments, doubted not of his ability to please God, and that his state was safe and good. Upon these principles (which act uniformly upon all who are governed by them) his heart was filled with enmity against the doctrines and people of Jesus, and his blinded conscience taught him that it was his duty to oppose them. He was a willing witness at the death of Stephen (Acts xxii. 20), and, from a spectator, soon became a distinguished actor in the like tragedies. Such is the unavoidable gradation, in a state of nature, from bad to worse. The excess and effects of his rage are described by St. Luke in very lively colours; and he often acknowledges it in his epistles; for, though the Lord forgave him, he knew not how to forgive himself for having persecuted and wasted the church of God (Gal i. 13, 1 Cor. xv. 9): he made havock of the disciples like a lion or a wolf amongst a flock of sheep,—pressing into their houses, sparing none, not even women. Thus he was filled with the hateful spirit of persecution, which is undistinguishing and unrelenting. The mischiefs he could do in Jerusalem not being sufficient to gratify his insatiable cruelty and thirst of blood, he obtained (as has been formerly observed) a commission from the high-priest to harrass the disciples at Damascus. In this journey, when he was near the city, he was suddenly struck to the ground by the voice and appearance of the Lord Jesus From that hour a memorable change took place in his heart and views; and, having been baptized by Ananias, and received a free pardon of all his wickedness, with a commission to the apostolic office, he began to preach that faith which before he had so industriously laboured to destroy. In this new light we are now to consider him; and whatever may be reasonably expected from a sense of such a display of grace and mercy in his behalf, we shall find manifested in the subsequent course of his life. Happy are those

who come the nearest to such an exemplary pattern.

1. The characteristic excellence of St. Paul, which was as the spring or source of every other grace, was the ardency of the supreme love he bore to his Lord and Saviour: it would not be easy to find many periods throughout his epistles which do not evidence the fulness of his heart in this respect: he seems delighted even with the sound of the name of Jesus, so that, regardless of the cold rules of studied composition, we find him repeating it ten times in the compass of ten successive verses, 1 Cor. 1—10. He was so struck with the just claim the Saviour had to every heart, that he accounted a want of love to him the highest pitch of ingratitude and wickedness, and deserving the utmost severity of wrath and ruin, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. When he was conscious that, for his unwearied application to the service of the gospel, in defiance of the many dangers and deaths which awaited him in every place, he appeared to many as one beside himself, and transported beyond the bounds of sober reason, he thought it a sufficient apology to say, "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Cor. v. 14); we are content to be fools for his sake, to be despised, so he may be honoured, to be nothing in ourselves, that he may be all in all: he had such a sense of the glorious, invaluable excellence of the person of Christ, of his adorable condescension in taking the nature and curse of sinners upon himself, and his complete suitableness and sufficiency, as the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people, that he often seems at a loss for words answerable to the emotions of his heart; and when he has exhausted the powers of language, and astonished his readers with his inimitable energy, he intimates a conviction of his inability to do justice to a subject, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of which are too great for our feeble capacities to grasp. But besides these general views, he was particularly affected with the exceeding abundant love and grace of Christ to himself, when he reflected on the circumstances in which the Lord had found him, and the great things he had done for him. That he who had before been a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, should be forgiven, accepted as a child of God, intrusted with the ministry of the gospel, and appointed to everlasting salvation, was indeed an instance of wonderful grace. So it appeared to himself; and at the thought of it he often seems to forget his present subject, and breaks forth into inimitable digressions to the praise of him who had loved him, and given himself for him. Happily convinced of the tendency and efficacy of this principle in himself, he proposes it to others, instead of a thousand arguments, whenever he would inculcate the most unreserved obedience to the whole will of God, or stir up believers to a holy diligence in adorning the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things; and his exhortations to the conscientious discharge of the various duties of relative life are generally enforced by this grand motive. In a word, at all times, and in all places, the habitual and favourite subject that employed his thoughts, his tongue, and his pen, was the love of Christ.

Supported and animated by this love, he exerted himself to the utmost in promoting the knowledge of him whom he loved, and bearing testimony to his power and grace: nothing could dishearten, or terrify, or bribe him from his duty; and this must, and will be universally the leading principle of a faithful minister. Should a man possess the tongue of men and angels, the finest genius, and the most admired accomplishments, if he is not constrained, and directed by the love of Christ, he will either do nothing, or nothing to the purpose: he will be unable to support either the frowns or the smiles of the world; his studies and endeavours will certainly be influenced by low and selfish views: interest, or a desire of applause, may stimulate him to shine as a scholar, a critic, or a philosopher; but till the love of Christ rules in his heart, he will neither have inclination nor power to exert himself for the glory of God, or the good of souls.

II. The inseparable effect, and one of the surest evidences of love to Christ, is a love to his people. Of this likewise our apostle exhibits an instructive and affecting example; the warmth and cordiality of his love to those who loved his Lord and Master, appear in every page of his writings; he so rejoiced in their prosperity, that, to hear of it at any time, made him in a manner forget his own sorrows,* when encompassed with troubles on every side; and though, in many instances, he did not meet that grateful return he had reason to expect, yet he could not be discouraged; but when he had occasion to expostulate with some upon this account, he adds, I will still gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more I love you, the less I am loved, 2 Cor. xii. 5. Of such a generous temper as this, the world, would they observe it, must acknowledge (as the magicians in Egypt), this is the finger of God; for nothing but his grace can produce a conduct so contrary to the natural inclination of man, as to persevere and increase in kindness and affection to those who persevere in requiting it

*2 Cor. vii. 7, 13; see likewise Phil. ii. 28. which finely intimates his tenderness and affection. He was oppressed with sorrow upon sorrow; yet he felt more for the Philippians than for himself. He mourned over Epaphroditus, when sick for their sakes; and sent him away for their comfort when recovered: and, this he did as the most effectual means to lessen his own burden, by sympathising in that joy his friends would have in the interview, though he could not directly partake with them.

with coldness and ingratitude. His epistles to the Thessalonians abound in such expressions and strains of tenderness as would doubtless be generally admired (especially by those who can read them in the original), were they not overlooked, through the unhappy disregard which too many shew to that best of books in which they are contained. When he is appealing to themselves concerning the sincerity of his conduct, and how far he had been from abusing his authority, he says, We were gentle among you, even as a nurse (or mother) cherisheth her children; who, by her tender and assiduous offices, supplies their inability to take care of themselves, 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. It would be well if all who have aimed to derive a plenitude of power from the example of the apostle, were equally desirous to imitate him in the use of it. He then adds, So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. No comment can do justice to the spirit of this sentiment, or to the force of the expression in the Greek. In another passage, which is rendered in our version, We being taken from you,' the original term * has an emphasis which no single word in our language can answer; it imports such a state of separation as is made between a parent and a child by the death of either, when the child is left a helpless and exposed orphan, or the parent is bereaved of the staff and comfort of his age; it beautifully intimates the endearing affection which subsisted between the apostle and the persons he was writing to; and demonstrates the greatest tenderness, simplicity, and condescension. But his regard went beyond words, and was evidenced by the whole course of his actions. Nor was it confined to those who had enjoyed the benefits of his personal ministry: his heart was charged with the care and welfare of all the churches; and those who had not seen his face in the flesh, had an unceasing share in his solicitude and prayers (Col. ii. 1.): nay, so strong was his love to the churches, that it balanced his habitual desire to be with Christ; he could not determine which was most eligible, to suffer with the members upon earth (so that he might be serviceable to them), or to reign with the Head in heaven, Phil. i. 23, 24. In the passage referred to, we see the happy centripetal and centrifugal forces which carried him on through the circle of duty, he constantly tended and gravitated to his centre of rest: but successive opportunities of usefulness and service drew him off, and made him willing to wait yet longer.

In this part of his character we are not to consider him exclusively as an apostle. All who have truly known the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, are partakers of the same spirit, according to the measure of their faith. That person is unworthy the name of a christian, who does not feel a concern and affection for his brethren who are in the world. It must be allowed, that prejudices and misapprehensions too often prevent the Lord's people from knowing each other; but, so far as they believe a person to be a child of God through faith, they cannot but love him. This is the immutable criterion which our Lord himself has given, whereby his real disciples are to be known and acknowledged, John xiii. 35. He has not directed us to judge by their discourses, their knowledge, or even their zeal, but by the evidence they give of mutual love; and we may as easily conceive of a sun without light, or a cause without an effect, as of a person duly affected with a sense of the glory of God, and the love of Christ, and not proportionably filled with a spirit of love to all who are like minded. But especially this disposition is essential to a minister of the gospel; and the apostle assures us, that all imaginable qualifications are of no avail without it; though we could possess the powers of a prophet, or an angel, or the zeal of a martyr, if we are destitute of this love, we are, in the sight of God, but as sounding brass,* or a tinkling cymbal.

III. St. Paul's inflexible attachment to the great doctrines of the gospel is another part of his character which deserves our attention: he knew their worth, experienced their power in his own soul, and saw, that though they were unacceptable to the wisdom of the world, they bore the impress of the manifold wisdom of God. He takes notice that, in those early days, there were many who corrupted the word of God.† The word properly signifies to adulterate, to imitate the practice of dishonest vintners, who mix and sophisticate their liqours, so that, though the colour is preserved and the taste perhaps nearly counterfeited, the quality and properties are quite altered and depraved. But he says, We are not as they: he preached the gospel in its purity and simplicity, the sincere genuine milk‡ of the word, neither weakened by water, nor disguised by any artful sweetening to render it more palatable: he added nothing of his own, nor employed any art or gloss to palliate the truth, that it might be more acceptable to men of carnal minds; as he was not ashamed of it, neither was he afraid lest it should fall without success to the ground, if not supported and assisted by inventions of his own; he knew whose word it was, and therefore cheer-

Ἀποῤῥανισθέντες, 1 Thess. ii. 17.

* *Sounding brass*, without meaning, and without life. Such are the most specious gifts and performances, if unaccompanied by a spirit of love: they may perhaps be useful to others, as the sound of a bell gives notice, and brings people together, but the possessor himself is a lifeless instrument; he designs no good, and will receive no reward.

† Καπηλεύοντες, 2 Cor. ii. 17. ‡ Δδολον γαλα, 1 Pet ii 2.

fully ventured the issue with him who alone could procure it a welcome reception; and as he disdained the thought of deviating a tittle himself from the plain and full declaration of the truth, neither could he bear, no not for an hour, with those who presumed to do so, Gal. ii. 5. I doubt not but the warmth of his zeal, in this respect, has disgusted many in the present day, wherein a seeming candour and forbearance is pleaded for and extended to almost every sentiment, except the truths in which St. Paul gloried. There is little doubt but many, if they had the courage and honesty to speak out, would add St. Paul himself to the list of those whom they despise as uncharitable and hot-brained bigots; for who has offended more than he against the rules of that indifference to error, which is at present miscalled charity. The Galatians, in a short time after he left them, had ventured to admit some alteration in the doctrine they had received from him; it was chiefly in one point: they had been persuaded into an undue regard for the law of Moses. This, some may think, was little more than a circumstantial: that it could not have any great or direct influence upon their moral practice; and that they might be very good men, and good christians, though, in this one thing, they could not see exactly with their teacher's eyes. But how different was the apostle's judgment! If the Galatians had returned to the practice of idolatry, or broken out into the most scandalous immoralities, he could hardly have expressed his surprise and grief in stronger terms; he changes his usual manner of address, and speaks to them as a senseless people (Gal. iii. 1), under the power of some unaccountable fascination; he tells them, that, by admitting such an addition (Gal. i. 6—9), small and inconsiderable as they might think it, they had, in effect, received another gospel, which was, however, so enervated and despoiled of efficacy, that it was, more properly speaking, become no gospel at all, utterly unworthy the least pretence to the name. Further, he denounces an anathema (the highest curse) upon any person who should dare to preach any such pretended gospel, even though, if such a thing were possible, it should be himself, or an angel from heaven; and this denunciation he immediately repeats, lest it should be thought that he spoke rather from warmth of temper than from a just sense of the importance of the case. What would some of my readers think of a man who should, at this time, express himself in terms like these? But let it be remembered, that our apostle, who was so ready with an anathema upon this occasion, and who, in another place (1 Cor xvi. 22.), passes the same severe judgment upon any man who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, was far from speaking thus from emotions of anger and ill-will; the disposition of his own mind, the tender concern with which he viewed the worst of sinners may be judged of from his willingness to be made an anathema himself (Rom. ix. 3), after the manner of Christ, if, by all he could suffer, he might be a means of saving the Jews, who were his worst enemies, and from whom he had constantly received the most unjust and cruel treatment; but, when the cause of the gospel and the honour of Christ were in question, he could not, he durst not, consult with the feelings of flesh and blood: but as the minister and messenger of the Lord, he solemnly declared what must, and will be, the awful consequence of neglecting or corrupting the word of life.

Every faithful minister of the gospel is possessed of a degree of the same attention to the purity of the truth and faith once delivered to the saints; they must not deviate from their instructions, nor can they behold with indifference the specious attempts of others to mislead the unwary; they know what censures they must expect upon this account. It is sufficient for them that they can appeal to the searcher of hearts, that though, as the servants of Christ, they dare not aim to please men by speaking smooth things, yet they act from principles of benevolence and love, and would rejoice in the salvation of their greatest opposers. The world perhaps would judge more favourably of them if they knew all; if they were witnesses to the prayers and tears which they pour out for them in secret, and the emotions of mind they feel when they are constrained to declare the more awful parts of their message; but as ministers, and in their public work, they cannot avoid pointing out the danger of those who venture their souls and eternal hopes upon any other doctrine than that which St. Paul preached.

IV. But though St. Paul was so tenacious of the great foundation-truths of the gospel, and would not admit or connive at any doctrine that interfered with them, he exercised, upon all occasions, a great tenderness to weak consciences, in matters that were not essential to the faith, and when the scruples were owing rather to a want of clear light than to obstinacy. This was evident in his conduct with regard to the great controversy that soon took place between the Jewish and Gentile converts, about the distinction of meats, and drinks, and other rituals enjoined by the law of Moses; the obligation (Rom. xiv.) of which, many who had been educated in the practice of those observances, did not immediately see was superseded by the gospel of Christ: He knew and asserted his own liberty; yet, in condescension to the weakness of others, he often abridged himself of it, and declared that, rather than grieve or cause offence to a weak brother, he would eat no

meat while the world stood. His practice herein will probably be of general application, *mutatis mutandis*, so long as the present state of human infirmity subsists. A defect in knowledge, the prejudices of education and custom, the remains of a legal spirit, the influence of great names, and other causes of a like nature, will probably always operate, so far as to keep up lesser differences in judgment and practice amongst those who agree in the great and fundamental truths. The enemy gains too much advantage from these things, not to improve such differences into divisions. Self is too prevalent in the best men, and the tendency of self is, to exact submission, to hurry to extremes, to exaggerate trifles into points of great consequence, and to render us averse to the healing expedients of peace. From these sources, discords and evils innumerable have been multiplied and perpetuated among the various denominations under which the Lord's people have been ranged, which have greatly hindered the welfare and progress of the common cause, and exposed each contending party to the scorn of their real enemies. But were the spirit and conduct of our apostle more adopted, many debates would entirely cease; and in those things where a difference of judgment would still subsist, the exercise of patience, gentleness, and mutual forbearance, would perhaps afford fairer occasion for the display of the christian character, than if we were all exactly of a mind; then the strong would bear the infirmities of the weak, the one would not censure, nor the other despise; nor would those whose minds have been enlarged by a variety of experience and observation, think it at all strange, much less would they be angry, if others who have not had the same advantages cannot immediately enter into all their sentiments. St. Paul, in knowledge, abilities, and usefulness, was eminently superior to all those among whom he chiefly conversed, and, as an apostle, he had a stronger right than any man since the apostle's day could have to exact an implicit deference and submission; but he had drunk deeply of the spirit of his Master, and we are concerned to follow him, as he followed Christ, in the exercise of tenderness to the weakest of the flock.

It is not my present business to define what are properly essentials in the christian religion, and to separate them clearly from the less important points, which, for that reason, and in contradistinction to the other, are called circumstantials. This would lead me too far, though perhaps it would not be so difficult as a person might at first expect, who should be told of all that has been written (with little satisfaction) upon the subject. I forsee a future period in our history, when a disquisition of this kind will be almost necessary; and if I am spared to reach so far, I shall probably embrace the occasion. In the mean time I would just hint an observation or two upon this head, which the intelligent reader (if he thinks them just) may apply as he sees proper.

1. Circumstantials and essentials in religion (if we speak with propriety) are derived from the same source, and resolved into the same authority. To consider the commands of God as essentials, and the inventions and traditions of men superadded thereto as circumstantials, would be a very improper, and indeed a very false division of the subject. Nothing but what is prescribed by the word of God, or may be fairly deduced from it, is worthy the name even of a circumstantial in true religion. Human appointments, if not repugnant to scripture and the light of conscience, may be submitted to for the sake of peace, or when the general purposes of edification cannot be attained without them; but they seem not to deserve a place even among the circumstantials of a religion which is of divine institution. All the laboured arguments, whether for or against the colour of a garment, the shape of a building, and a multitude of other things equally insignificant, seem to have occasioned a needless loss of time and temper, chiefly by a mistake of the question on both sides.

2. Essentials in christianity are those things without which no man can be a christian in the sight of God, and by the decision of his word; and, on the other hand, those things only are essential which whoever possesses, is by scripture-declaration, in a state of favour with God through Christ. These might be branched out into many particulars; but they are fully and surely comprised in two, Faith and Holiness. These are essential to the being of a christian, are only to be found in a christian, are infallible tokens that the possessor is accepted in the Beloved, and whoever dies without them must assuredly perish: These are essentials, because they are absolutely necessary; for it is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16.), and "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14.): and they are essential likewise, because they demonstrate an interest in the promise of everlasting life. Thus our Lord declares, "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24.); and the apostle, writing to the believing Romans, tells them, "Now, being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22. These then are the essentials of religion: and though they are produced by the same power of the Holy Spirit, and derived from a knowledge of the same truths, and therefore cannot be separated, they may properly be distinguished for the conviction of those who

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upon such base and unworthy views. It is to
be feared, that too many read the awful de-
nunciations upon this head in the prophets Je-
remiah (chap. xxiii.) and Ezekiel (chap. xiii.
and xxxiv.), with indifference, as supposing
they only relate to the Jews who lived at that
time; but they are equally applicable to all
who prostitute the word and worship of God
to the purposes of ambition and avarice.

VI. From the foregoing particulars we may collect the idea of true christian zeal, as exemplified in our apostle. Hardly any word in our language is more misunderstood, or abused than zeal.* It is used in the New Testament indifferently in a good or bad sense; and it is considered as a vice or virtue, according to its object and principle. It sometimes denotes envy,* indignation, or disdain, an obstinate and ignorant opposition to the truth, a misguided warmth in unnecessary things, and a contentious, disputatious temper. A zeal replete with these characters has too frequently been the bane and opprobrium of the christian church; but it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing; and then it is sinful to be otherwise. Our passions were not given us in vain. When the judgment is well informed, and the understanding duly enlightened by the word of God, the more warmth the better; but this earnestness in an ignorant or prejudiced person is dangerous, and hurtful to himself and others; it is like haste in a man in the dark, who knows not where he is going, nor what mischiefs he may suffer or occasion. False zeal spends its strength in defence of names and forms, the externals of religion, or the inventions of men; it enforces its edicts by compulsion and severity; it would willingly call for fire from heaven, but, unable to do this, it kindles the flame of persecution, and, if not providentially restrained, wages war with the peace, comfort, and liberty of all who disdain to wear its chains, and breathes threatening, slaughter and destruction with an unrelenting spirit. Its mildest weapons (which it never employs alone, except where it is checked by a superior power) are calumny, contempt and hatred; and the objects it seeks to worry are generally the quiet in the land, and those who worship God in spirit and in truth: in a word, it resembles the craft by which it works, and is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the true christian zeal is a heavenly, gentle flame: it shines and warms, but knows not to destroy: it is the spirit of Christ, infused, with a sense of his love, into the heart: it is a generous philanthropy and benevolence, which, like the light of the sun, diffuses itself to every object, and longs to be the instrument of good, if possible, to the whole race of mankind. A sense of the worth of souls, the importance of unseen things, and the awful condition of unawakened sinners, makes it indeed earnest and importunate, but this it shews not by bitterness and constraint, but by an unwearied perseverance in attempting to overcome† evil with good: it returns blessings for curses,

* All religious parties profess a great regard to the precept, Jude 3. "Contend earnestly for the faith." And if noisy anger, bold assertions, harsh censures, and bitter persecuting zeal can singly or jointly answer the apostle's design, there is hardly a party but may glory in their obedience. But if the weapons of our warfare are not carnal;—if the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;—if the true Christian contention can only be maintained by scripture arguments, meekness, patience, prayer, and an exemplary conversation;—if this is the true state of the case, where is the church or party (may I not say, where is the person?) that has not still much to learn and to practise on this point?

* Compare Acts v. 17; Rom. xiii. 13, x. 2; Phil. iii. 6; Gal. i. 14; Acts xvi. 20; James iii. 16; in all which places the word is the same that is rendered in 2 Cor. ix. 2; Col. iv. 13; John ii. 17.

† See Romans xxii. 20, 21. This practice

pretend to one without the other. The most specious appearances of holiness, which are not accompanied with faith in Christ, may be safely rejected as counterfeits. On the other hand, a profession of faith which is not evidenced by the fruits of holiness, by gracious tempers, and a tenor of life becoming the gospel, is dead, delusory, and destructive.

If the question is removed another step, and it should be asked, Which, or how many, of the doctrines of scripture are necessary to produce the faith and holiness supposed requisite? it may suffice to say, That, in the nature of things, no person can be expected to believe in Christ, till convinced of his need of him, and of his ability, as a Saviour, fully to answer his expectations: and as a supreme love to God, and a hatred of all sin, are evidently included in the idea of holiness, it supposes a disposition of mind, which every man's experience proves to be beyond the power of fallen nature; and therefore a competent knowledge and cordial acceptance of what the scriptures teach concerning the nature and desert of sin, the person and mediatory acts of Christ, the causes, ends, and effects of his mediation, together with the necessity of that change of heart which is expressed by a being born again, appear to be essentially necessary to that faith and holiness which are described in the gospel.

3. The circumstantials of religion include all those particulars of revelation, which a person possessed of the above-mentioned essentials may as yet be unacquainted with, or unable to judge of with certainty. A careful application to the scriptures, a diligent waiting upon God in prayer, and an improvement of the means of grace, will (by the divine blessing, which is promised to those who seek in this manner) increase our light, comprehension, and certainty, with regard to these points, which, though not essentially necessary to the being of a christian, are exceedingly conducive to his well-being, to his growth and establishment in the truth.

This subject may be perhaps illustrated from the animal frame, in which what we call the vital parts may be considered as essential to life, because there can be no life without them. We may easily conceive, that a man may live without an arm or leg, or several members and organs, which, though highly valuable for use and comfort, are not necessarily connected with life; but if we conceive of him as deprived of his head, heart, or lungs, we can no longer consider him as living; yet it is desirable to have a body not only animated, but organized. So likewise in religion, those who are truly partakers of it will not too curiously inquire, how much knowledge, or what degree of practice is barely consistent with a possibility of life, but they will earnestly desire to be acquainted with the whole will of God, and that every part of it may have a suitable influence upon their practice: But, in the mean time, a consolation is provided, in the promises of God, made to those who have received the seeds of faith and true holiness, against the fears, doubts, and involuntary mistakes, which, from remaining ignorance, they are yet subject to: He will supply what is wanting, pardon what is amiss, and lead them on from strength to strength they are to walk by the light already afforded, to wait on him for an increase, to be diffident of themselves, and gentle to others, and things which as yet they know not, God will, in his due time, reveal to them. But to return from this digression:

V. Every part of St. Paul's history and writings demonstrates a disinterested spirit, and that his uncommon labours were directed to no other ends than the glory of God and the good of men. No man had probably so great an influence over his hearers, or could have a juster claim, from the nature and number of his services, to a suitable provision for himself; but he could say with truth, We seek not yours, but you. To cut off all occasions of misapprehension on this head, he usually submitted to work with his own hands, rather than be chargeable to his friends.* It is true, he does not propose himself to us a pattern in this respect; for he tells us (1 Cor. ix. 14.), that the labourer is worthy of his hire; and that the Lord had ordained, that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel; and when he saw it expedient, he did not refuse to be himself assisted by others. He shewed, by accepting such assistance from some, that he understood his liberty, and did not act from a spirit of pride or singularity when he declined it; and, by his more general practice, he evidenced that he was superior to all selfish and mercenary motives; and, upon the whole, he was content to appear and live as a poor man; and though he had learned, in the school of Christ, how to abound as well as to suffer want, the latter seems to have been more frequently his lot (Phil. iv. 12.): he saw too many false teachers, who, under the sanction of a sacred character, made merchandize of souls; and he not only severely censured them, but, by this self-denial, which they were unable to imitate, he manifested the vanity of their pretences in setting themselves forth as the apostles of Christ. This seems to have been his chief design in it, and the reason of his repeating, with so much earnestness, his determination to take nothing from the Corinthians, who were too

* 1 Cor. ix. 18. That I may make the gospel of Christ without charge.—Ἀδαπανον θησω, that I may set it before you *gratis*, or a free gospel. The messengers of good news are usually gratified with a reward; but the apostle, though he brought the most welcome and important tidings that ever rejoiced the hearts of men, would not encumber or disgrace the news, by receiving any thing for it. The truth is, he took as much pleasure in delivering his message as they could in hearing it, and found his reward in his employment.

much inclined to listen to some of these teachers, to his disadvantage. But whatever parade they might make of gifts or zeal, or however they might presume to equal themselves to him in other respects, he knew they would not attempt to share with him in the glory of preaching the gospel freely, which was diametrically inconsistent with their whole design. The circumstances with us are so far different, that, in proposing St. Paul as a pattern of disinterestedness, we do not lay a stress upon his preaching the gospel without expense to his hearers; yet, in his noble contempt of worldly advantage, and making every thing stoop to the great ends of his mission, he stands as a precedent to all christian ministers in succeeding times. In those passages of his epistles to Timothy and Titus, where the negative part of a minister's character, whether bishop or deacon, is given, this is constantly one branch of it, that he must not be influenced by a love of gain; and as constantly the word is compounded with the epithet filthy: "Not given to filthy lucre;" to intimate, that nothing can be more dishonest or dishonourable than to make a traffic of this service. Nor is this the judgment of scripture only, but the general voice of mankind. Nothing is a greater bar to a minister's usefulness, or renders his person and labours more contemptible, than a known attachment to money, a gripping fist, and a hard heart. They who enter into the priest's office for a piece of bread, who are less concerned for the flock than the fleece, who employ all their arts and influence to exchange a less emolument for a greater, or to superadd one to another, may have the reward they seek; but of all the methods of acquiring wealth, which do not directly expose a man to the lash of human laws, this is the most to be lamented and avoided. If the scriptures are true, if St. Paul was a servant of Christ, and if the authority of his precepts and example is still binding, a day will come when mercenary preachers will wish they had begged their bread from door to door, or been chained to the oar of a galley for life, rather than have presumed to intrude into the church upon such base and unworthy views. It is to be feared, that too many read the awful denunciations upon this head in the prophets Jeremiah (chap. xxiii.) and Ezekiel (chap. xiii. and xxxiv.), with indifference, as supposing they only relate to the Jews who lived at that time; but they are equally applicable to all who prostitute the word and worship of God to the purposes of ambition and avarice.

VI. From the foregoing particulars we may collect the idea of true christian zeal, as exemplified in our apostle. Hardly any word in our language is more misunderstood, or abused than zeal.* It is used in the New Testament indifferently in a good or bad sense; and it is considered as a vice or virtue, according to its object and principle. It sometimes denotes envy,* indignation, or disdain, an obstinate and ignorant opposition to the truth, a misguided warmth in unnecessary things, and a contentious, disputatious temper. A zeal replete with these characters has too frequently been the bane and opprobrium of the christian church; but it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing; and then it is sinful to be otherwise. Our passions were not given us in vain. When the judgment is well informed, and the understanding duly enlightened by the word of God, the more warmth the better; but this earnestness in an ignorant or prejudiced person is dangerous, and hurtful to himself and others; it is like haste in a man in the dark, who knows not where he is going, nor what mischiefs he may suffer or occasion. False zeal spends its strength in defence of names and forms, the externals of religion, or the inventions of men; it enforces its edicts by compulsion and severity; it would willingly call for fire from heaven, but, unable to do this, it kindles the flame of persecution, and, if not providentially restrained, wages war with the peace, comfort, and liberty of all who disdain to wear its chains, and breathes threatening, slaughter and destruction with an unrelenting spirit. Its mildest weapons (which it never employs alone, except where it is checked by a superior power) are calumny, contempt and hatred; and the objects it seeks to worry are generally the quiet in the land, and those who worship God in spirit and in truth: in a word, it resembles the craft by which it works, and is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the true christian zeal is a heavenly, gentle flame: it shines and warms, but knows not to destroy: it is the spirit of Christ, infused, with a sense of his love, into the heart: it is a generous philanthropy and benevolence, which, like the light of the sun, diffuses itself to every object, and longs to be the instrument of good, if possible, to the whole race of mankind. A sense of the worth of souls, the importance of unseen things, and the awful condition of unawakened sinners, makes it indeed earnest and importunate, but this it shews not by bitterness and constraint, but by an unwearied perseverance in attempting to overcome† evil with good: it returns blessings for curses,

* All religious parties profess a great regard to the precept, Jude 3. "Contend earnestly for the faith." And if noisy anger, bold assertions, harsh censures, and bitter persecuting zeal can singly or jointly answer the apostle's design, there is hardly a party but may glory in their obedience. But if the weapons of our warfare are not carnal;—if the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;—if the true Christian contention can only be maintained by scripture arguments, meekness, patience, prayer, and an exemplary conversation;—if this is the true state of the case, where is the church or party (may I not say, where is the person?) that has not still much to learn and to practise on this point?

* Compare Acts v. 17; Rom. xiii. 13, x. 2; Phil. iii. 6; Gal. i. 14; Acts xvi. 20; James iii. 16; in all which places the word is the same that is rendered zeal in 2 Cor. ix. 2; Col. iv. 13; John ii. 17.

† See Romans xxii. 20, 21. This practice the apos-

prayers for ill treatment; and, though often reviled and affronted, cannot be discouraged from renewed efforts to make others partakers of the happiness itself possesses: it knows how to express a becoming indignation against the errors and follies of men; but towards their persons it is all gentleness and compassion:* it weeps (and would, if possible, weep tears of blood) over those who will not be persuaded; but, while it plainly represents the consequences of their obstinacy, it trembles at its own declarations,† and feels for them who cannot feel for themselves, it is often grieved, but cannot be provoked. The zealous christian is strictly observant of his own failings, candid and tender to the faults of others: he knows what allowances are due to the frailty of human nature, and the temptations of the present state, and willingly makes all the allowances possible; and though he dare not call evil good, cannot but judge according to the rule of the scripture, yet he will conceal the infirmities of men as much as he can, will not speak of them without just cause, much less will he aggravate the case, or boast himself over them. Such was the zeal of our apostle. Bold and intrepid in the cause of God and truth, unwearied in service, inflexible in danger, when duty called, he was not to be restrained, either by the threats of enemies, the solicitations of friends, or the prospect of any hardships to which he might be exposed: he cheerfully endured hunger and thirst, watching and weariness, poverty and contempt, and counted not his life dear, so that he might fulfil the great purposes of the ministry which he had received of the Lord. But at the same time, in all his intercourse with men, he was gentle, mild, and compassionate; he studied the peace, and accommodated himself to the weakness of all about him: when he might command, he used entreaties; when he met with hard and injurious treatment, he bore it patiently, and, if opportunity offered, requited it with kindness. Thus as he had drunk of the spirit, so he walked in the steps of his Lord and Master.

All who bear the name of ministers of Christ would do well to examine how far their tempers and conduct are conformable to St. Paul's. Are there not too many who widely differ from him? Where he was immoveable as an iron pillar, they are flexible and yielding as a reed waving in the wind, suiting their doctrines and practice to the depraved state of the world, and prostituting their talents and calling to the unworthy pursuit of ambition and applause. On the other hand, in things less essential, or not commanded, they invade the rights of private judgment, and attempt to bind heavy yokes* and impositions upon those whom Christ has made free; and while they readily tolerate, if not countenance, scepticism, and immorality, they exert all their strength and subtlety to disquiet or suppress those who differ from them in the slightest circumstance, if they profess to differ for conscience sake. But Jesus has no such ministers: their claim is utterly vain; none but those who are ignorant of the plainest truths can allow them this character: their tempers, their behaviour, the tenor of their professed instructions, and the total want of efficacy and influence in their ministrations, plainly demonstrate that he neither sent them nor owns them.

VII. Having considered the subject-matter, and the leading views of the apostle's ministry, it may not be improper to take some notice of his manner as a preacher. This he reminds the Corinthians of. They were reputed a polite and ingenuous people. St. Paul was aware of their character, and expresses himself as if he had been deliberating before he saw them in what way he should address them with the fairest probability of success. He tells them (1 Cor. ii. 2—4), that he determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, including in this one comprehensive expression, the whole scheme of gospel-doctrine. And as to the manner in which he delivered this doctrine, he says, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." We are sure that he did not renounce justness of reasoning, or propriety of expression; in these respects he exceeded their most admired orators, as

the recommends by the metaphor of heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head. As metals that endure a moderate warmth without alteration are melted down and quite dissolved by an intense heat, so the hard heart, even of an enemy, may be sometimes softened by a series, and indefatigable heaping up of favours and obligations. This is a noble piece of chemistry, but almost as much out of repute and practice as the search after the philosopher's stone.

* When St. Paul, speaking of the Judaizing false teachers, and their adherents, says, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you," he seems to allude to the circumcision they so strenuously enforced, Gal. v. 12; compare Phil. iii. 2. His wish concerning these sectaries has been often perverted, to give sanction to the rage of persecutors; but he does not mean to cut them off with fire and sword, or to cut them off from fire and water, but to have them excluded from communion and converse with true believers.

† How awful to declare, to denounce the terrors of the Lord! those terrors which are represented to us by fire unquenchable, with the additional idea of eternity, Matth. iii. 13; Mark ix. 43.—As such descriptions shock and alarm a guilty conscience, there are two different methods by which the removal of this alarm is attempted: some seek and find peace and security from the blood of Jesus; and some, who are not pleased with this method, satisfy themselves and their friends with criticisms upon the terms, and tell us that the phrase "for ever and ever," signifies a limited space, and that "fire that cannot be quenched," denotes fire that goes out of itself.

* Matth. xxiii. 4. "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne," a weight of traditions and observances, "and lay them upon men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." There is a double opposition in this passage, between to *be borne* and to *move*, and between the *shoulders* and a *finger*. It has been often found since, that those who are most impatient of restraint themselves are most earnest in pressing yokes and bands upon others.

may appear to any who have skill and candour to compare his epistles and discourses, in the original, with the best performances of the Greek writers; but he renounced the enticing or plausible words of man's wisdom. In the term man's wisdom, I apprehend, may be included whatever the natural faculties of man are capable of discovering or receiving, independent of the peculiar teaching of the Spirit of God, which is promised and restrained to those who, sensible of their own foolishness, are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God; and the enticing words of man's wisdom may include all those ways and arts which the wise men of the world have used or approved, as most effectual to express, adorn,* or defend their own wise sentiments and discoveries. These, and the methods of setting them off to advantage, have been divided into many branches, and dignified with sounding names; but all the efforts of man's wisdom, considered as engaged in the subjects of religion and morals, may be summed up in three particulars: 1. A vain inquiry into things which lie wholly bevond the capacity of man in his present state, and which can only be discovered by supernatural revelation; 2. A vain attempt to account for every thing according to the light and principles of depraved reason; 3. A studious exactness in language, either an easy flow of words to please and amuse the ear, or a torrent of strong and figurative expressions to engage the passions, according as a different taste or fashion happens to prevail. It would be too dry a task to illustrate these points by adducing specimens of each from the works of the ancient and modern philosophers; but if we had not other employment in hand, it would be easy to shew that man's wisdom, in the first sense, is uncertainty, in the second prejudice, in the third, imposition and artifice. It is sufficient for my present purpose that the apostle renounced them all. Instead of vain† conjectures, he spoke from certain experience; he could say, I received of the Lord that which I also delivered to you. Instead of accommodating his doctrine to the taste and judgment of his hearers, he spoke with authority, in the name of God whom he served: instead of losing time in measuring words and syllables, that he might obtain the character of a fine speaker, he spoke, from the feeling and fulness of his heart, the words of simplicity and truth. The success of his preaching did not at all depend upon the softness and harmony of his periods, and therefore he disdained an attention to those petty ornaments of speech, which were quite necessary to help out the poverty of man's wisdom; he sought something else, which those who preach themselves rather than Christ Jesus the Lord, have little reason to expect;* I mean the power and demonstration of the Spirit: he knew that this alone could give him success; and ministers may learn from him what to avoid, and what to seek for, if they would be useful to their hearers. Men can but declare the truths of the gospel; it is the Spirit of God who alone can reveal them: nothing less than a divine power can present them to the mind in their just importance, and throw light into the soul, by which they may be perceived: nothing less than this power can subdue the will, and open the heart to receive the truth in the love of it: without this concurring agency, even St. Paul would have preached in vain. From what has been said, we may remark two obvious reasons, amongst others, why we have so much unsuccessful preaching in our days, either the gospel-truths are given up, or the gospel-simplicity departed from. Where either of these is the case, the Lord refuses his power and blessing.

VIII. Another observable part of St. Paul's character, is his unaffected humility. In the midst of his eminent and extensive services, he retained a deep sense of the part he once acted against the Lord. He speaks of himself, on this account, in the most abasing language, as the chief of sinners, and strongly expresses his unworthiness of the grace and apostleship he had received, by comparing himself to an untimely birth;† and though his insight into the mysteries of the gospel, the communion he maintained with God, by

* In 1 Cor. xiv. 9. St. Paul recommends "words easy to be understood." His reasoning in that chapter is levelled, not only against the absurdity of speaking in an unknown tongue, but against the use of any terms, or the treating upon any subjects which are not adapted to the level of the auditory. Many discourses that are expressed in English phrases, are as useless to the bulk of the people as if they were delivered in Greek; for what have the people to do with scholastic or metaphysical niceties, or curious researches into antiquity, or elegant dissertations upon the fitness of things? They cannot understand them; and if they could, they would find them nothing to their purpose.

† Though the apostle disclaimed the light sophistry which obtained in the schools, the tenor of his preaching was founded upon the clearest principles, and contained a chain of the justest consequences. He did not only assert, but prove and demonstrate the truth of his doctrines, by ancient prophecies, by recent facts, and by a present incontestible efficacy. Yet it is called "the demonstration of the Spirit," to intimate that the strongest and best adapted evidence is insufficient to the purposes of salvation unless accompanied with a divine power

* A man who has languages and sciences in his head, but does not know or relish the gospel of Christ, is an ignorant, indeed a stupid person, unaffected with the grandest view of wisdom, power, and goodness that ever was or can be displayed; and whoever truly knows and embraces this mystery of godliness is a wise man, a person of an excellent understanding, though he may not be much acquainted with those uncertain, unsatisfying systems which men have agreed to honour with the name of knowledge. See Ps. cxi. 10.

† 1 Cor. xv. 8. "As one born out of due time." The original word is εκτρωμα, that is, *an abortion*. He speaks of himself under this despicable image (the true sense of which is not easily perceived by an English reader), to shew the deep and humbling sense he retained of the part he once acted against the church of Christ; he considered himself as unworthy and contemptible to the last degree, as one of whom no good hope could be justly formed at that time, much less that he should be honoured with a sight of the Lord Jesus from heaven, and with a call to the apostolic office.

faith in his Son, and the beauty of holiness which shone in his conversation, were all beyond the common measure; yet having, in the same proportion, a clearer sense of his obligations, and of the extent and purity of the divine precepts, he thought nothing of his present attainments, in comparison of those greater degrees of grace he was still pressing after.* While, in the eyes of others, he appeared not only exemplary, but unequalled, he esteemed himself less than the least of all saints (Ephes. iii. 9.); and his patience and condescension towards others, and his acquiescence under all the trying dispensations of providence with which he was exercised, were a proof that this was not an affected manner of expression, but the genuine dictate of his heart. To speak of one's self in abasing terms is easy; and such language is often a thin vail, through which the motions of pride may be easily discerned: but though the language of humility may be counterfeited, its real fruits and actings are inimitable. Here again he is a pattern for christians. An humble frame of mind is the strength and ornament of every other grace, and the proper soil wherein they grow. A proud christian, that is, one who has a high conceit of his own abilities and attainments, is no less a contradiction than a sober drunkard, or a generous miser. All other seeming excellencies are of no real value, unless accompanied with this; and though a person should appear to have little more than a consciousness of his own insufficiency, and a teachable dependent spirit, and is waiting upon the Lord, in his appointed way, for instruction and a blessing, he will infallibly thrive, as a tree planted by the water-side; for God, who resisteth the proud, has promised to give grace to the humble, James iv. 6. But, in an especial manner, humility is necessary and beautiful in a minister; the greatest abilities, and most unwearied diligence, will not ensure success without it; a secret (if allowed) apprehension of his own importance, will deprive him of that assistance without which he can do nothing; his arm will be dried up, and his right eye will be darkened (Zech. xi. 17.); for the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all human glory, and will honour none but those who abase themselves, and are willing to give all the praise to him alone. If any man hath ground to set a value upon his knowledge, gifts, and services, St. Paul might justly claim the pre-eminence: but though he was an apostle, and an inspired writer; though he had planted churches through a considerable part of the known world; though he was received as an angel by many to whom he preached, and, by a peculiar favour, had been caught up into the third heaven; yet he was, by grace, preserved from being exalted above measure, or from assuming an undue superiority over his brethren. The authority with which he was entrusted he employed solely to their advantage, and accounted himself the least of all, and the servant of all. How very opposite has been the conduct of many since his time, who have aimed to appropriate the name of ministers of Christ, exclusively to themselves.

Such was our apostle; and the same spirit (though in an inferior degree) will be found in all the faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus: they love his name; it is the pleasing theme of their ministry; and to render it glorious in the eyes of sinners is the great study of their lives; for his sake they love all who love him, and are their willing servants to promote the comfort and edification of their souls: They love his gospel, faithfully proclaim it without disguise or alteration, and shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, so far as they are themselves acquainted with it: they contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and are desirous to preserve and maintain the truth in its power and purity. The knowledge of their own weakness and fallibility makes them tender to the weakness of others; and though they dare not lay, or allow, any other foundation than that which God has laid in Zion, yet, knowing that the kingdom of God does not consist in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, they guard against the influence of a party-spirit; and, if their labours are confined to christians of one denomination, their love and prayers are not limited within such narrow bounds, but extend to all who love and serve their Master: they have entered upon the ministry, not for low and sordid ends, for popular applause or filthy lucre, but from a constraining sense of the love of Jesus, and a just regard to the worth and danger of immortal souls: their zeal is conducted and modelled by the example and precepts of their Lord; their desire is not to destroy, but to save, and they wish their greatest enemies a participation in their choicest blessings. In the subject matter and manner of their preaching, they shew that they seek not to be men-pleasers, but to commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and when they have done their utmost, and when God has blessed their labours, and given them acceptance and success beyond their hopes, they are conscious of the defects and evils attending their best endeavours, of the weak influence the truths they preach to others have upon their own hearts, that their sufficiency of every kind is of God, and not of themselves; and therefore they sit down ashamed, as unprofitable ser-

* Phil. iii. 13, "Forgetting the things that are behind." As a traveller upon urgent business posts from place to place, forgets the distance and inconveniences behind him, and has all his thoughts taken up with the place he would be at, and the remainder of the road that leads to it.

vants, and can rejoice or glory in nothing, but in him who came into the world to save the chief of sinners.

It might be expected that a spirit and conduct, thus uniformly benevolent and disinterested, and witnessed to, in a greater or less degree, by the good effect of their ministry and example amongst their hearers, would secure them the good-will of mankind, and entitle them to peace, if not to respect: But, on the contrary, these are the very people who are represented as deceivers of souls, and disturbers of society: they are not permitted to live in some places; and it is owing to a concurrence of favourable circumstances, if they are permitted to speak in any: The eyes of many are upon them, watching for their halting; their infirmities are aggravated, their expressions wrested, their endeavours counteracted, and their persons despised. The design of our history is, to shew, in the course of every period of the church, that those who have approached nearest to the character I have attempted to delineate from St. Paul,* have always met with such treatment; and from his declaration, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12.), we may expect it will always be so, while human nature and the state of the world remain as they are. However, it may be a consolation to those who suffer for righteousness sake, to reflect, that the apostles were treated thus before them, particularly St. Paul, who, as he laboured, so he suffered more abundantly than the rest; his person was treated with contempt and despite, his character traduced, his doctrine misrepresented; and though his natural and acquired abilities were great, and he spoke with power and the demonstration of the Spirit, yet he was esteemed the filth and off-scouring of all things, a babbler, and a madman,† Acts, xvii. 18.

* Our Lord's declaration, "Behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves," is applicable to all his servants. The sight of a lamb is sufficient to provoke the rage and appetite of a wolf: Thus the spirit of the gospel awakens the rage and opposition of the world; they have an antipathy to it, and owe it a grudge wherever they see it.

† 2 Cor. v. 13. See likewise Mark, iii. 21. "And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said, He is beside himself:" That is to say, his attention to the office he has undertaken has transported him beyond the bounds of reason, and made him forget his station, his friends, and his safety; therefore, out of pure affection and prudence, they would have confined him: Nor is it any wonder that our Lord's friends and relatives should thus think and speak of him, since we are assured that even his brethren did not believe on him, John, vii. 3. And there seems to have been no possible medium. All who were conversant with him, must either receive him as the Messiah, or pity, if not despise, him as a madman. This was the mildest judgment they could form; the Pharisees indeed went farther, and pronounced him an impostor and a devil. Such was the treatment our Lord and Master found. Let not, then, his disciples and servants be surprised or grieved that they are misrepresented and misunderstood, on account of their attachment to him; but let them comfort themselves with his gracious words, John, xv 18—21.

CHAP. III.

OF THE IRREGULARITIES AND OFFENCES WHICH APPEARED IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

THERE are few things in which the various divisions of professing christians are so generally agreed, as in speaking highly and honourably of primitive christianity. In many persons this is no more than an ignorant admiration, not capable of distinguishing what is truly praise-worthy, but disposed to applaud every thing in the gross that has the sanction of antiquity to recommend it. The primitive christians have been looked upon, by some, as if they were not men of the same nature and infirmities with ourselves, but nearly infallible and perfect. This is often taken for granted in general; and when particulars are insisted on, it is observable, that they are seldom taken from the records of the New Testament, and the churches which flourished in the apostles times; but rather from those who lived in and after the second century, when a considerable deviation in doctrine, spirit, and conduct, from those which were indeed the primitive churches, had already taken place, and there were evident appearances of that curiosity, ambition, and will-worship, which increased by a swift progress, till at length professed christianity degenerated into little more than an empty name.

If christians of the early ages are supposed to have been more exemplary than in after periods, chiefly because they lived nearer to the times of our Lord and his apostles, it will follow of course, that the earlier the better. We may then expect to find most of the christian spirit among those who were converted and edified by the apostles personal ministry: and though we cannot allow the assumption (for the power of godliness depends not upon dates, periods, or instruments, but upon the influences of the Holy Spirit), yet we are content to join issue upon the conclusion, and are willing that all claims to a revival of religion, and a real reformation of manners, shall be admitted or rejected, as they accord or disagree with the accounts we have of the churches planted by the apostles, and during the time that these authorised ministers of Christ presided over them. We can find no other period in which we can, to so much advantage, propose the visible churches of Christ as a pattern and specimen of what his grace and gospel may be expected to produce in the present state of human nature; for the apostles were furnished, in an extraordinary manner, with zeal, wisdom, and authority for their work, and God was remarkably present with them, by the power of his Spirit. Besides, as all the information we have concerning this period is derived from the inspired writings, we have that certainty of facts to

ground our observations upon which no other history can afford.

We have a pleasing description of the first of these churches, which was formed at Jerusalem soon after our Lord's ascension. On the day of Pentecost, many who had personally consented to the death of Jesus, received power to believe in his name, and publicly joined themselves to his disciples; a sense of his love and grace to each united the whole body so closely together, that, though they were a multitude of several thousands, it is said (Acts iv. 32.), they were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common; and they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. These were happy times indeed! No interfering interests or jarring sentiments, no subtle or factious spirits, no remissness in the means of grace, no instances of a conduct in any respect unbecoming the gospel, were to be found among them; it seemed as if the powerful sense of divine truths, which they had received, had overborne, if not extirpated, every evil disposition in so large an assembly; yet, even this (the difference of numbers excepted) is no peculiar case. The like has been observable again and again, when God has been pleased to honour ministers, far inferior to the apostles, with a sudden and signal influence, in places where the power of the gospel had been little known before. In such circumstances, the truth has been often impressed and received with astonishing effects; many, who before were dead in trespasses and sins, having been, like those of old, pierced to the heart, and then filled with comfort, from a believing knowledge of him on whom their sins were laid, find themselves, as it were, in a new world; old things are past away; the objects of time and sense appear hardly worth their notice: the love of Christ constrains them, and they burn in love to all who will join them in praising the Saviour. Here indeed is a striking change wrought: yet the infirmities inseparable from human nature, though for the present overpowered, will, as occasions arise, discover themselves again, so far as to prove two things universally: 1. That the best of men are still liable to mistakes and weaknesses, for which they will have cause to mourn to the end of their lives. 2. That in the best times there will be some intruders, who for a season may make a profession, and yet in the end appear to have neither part nor lot in the matter. Thus it was in the church of Jerusalem: the pleasing state of things mentioned above did not continue very long; an Ananias and a Sapphira were soon found amongst them, who sought the praise of men, and made their profession a cloak for covetousness and hypocrisy (Acts v.); grudgings and murmurings arose in a little time between the Jews and the Hellenists (Acts vi.); and it was not long before they were thrown into strong debates, and in danger of divisions, upon account of the question first started at Antioch, Whether the law of Moses was still in force to believers or not? Acts xv.

In these latter times, when it has been attempted to vindicate and illustrate a revival of religion, by appealing to the writings of St. Paul, and the delineation he has given us of the faith and practice of a christian, the attempt has often excited disdain: it has been thought a sufficient answer, to enumerate and exaggerate the faults, mistakes, and inconsistencies (or what the world is pleased to account such) that are charged upon the persons concerned in such an appeal, as necessarily proving, that where these blemishes are found, there can be no resemblance to the first christians. If the frequency did not lessen the wonder, it might seem very unaccountable that any person who has read the New Testament should venture upon this method in a Protestant country, where the people have the scriptures in their hands, and are at liberty to judge for themselves. But as there are not a few, even among Protestants, who seem to expect their assertions will pass for proofs, I propose, in this chapter, to point out several things, which, though undoubtedly wrong, had a considerable prevalence among the first christians, leaving the application to the judicious reader. I acknowledge my firm persuasion, that a certain system of doctrine, revived of late years, is the doctrine of the Reformation, and of the New Testament; which, though not suited to the general and prevailing taste, is attended, more or less, with the blessing and power of God, in turning sinners from darkness to light: I confess, that both ministers and people who espouse this despised cause, have sufficient ground for humiliation: we have seen, we still see, many things amongst us which we cannot approve; we fear that too many are a real discredit to the cause they profess; and we are conscious, that the best of us fall mournfully short of what might be expected from the sublime principles which, by the grace of God, we have been taught from his word: we desire to be open to conviction, not to contend for errors, or even to vindicate any thing that can be proved contrary to the scripture; but if some things not justifiable, which we must own have accompanied what we verily believe to be a work of the Spirit of God, are (as some would represent them) sufficient to discredit this work, to impeach the truth of the doctrines, or the sincerity of the instruments in the gross; then we are sure it will follow upon the same principles, that the Jews and Heathens had just

ground and warrant to reject the doctrine of the apostles, and to treat their persons with contempt.

A competent knowlege and consideration of the present state of man, in himself, and of the circumstances in which he is placed, are necessary to preserve us from being offended with the gospel of Christ, on account of the imperfections that may be found in the conduct of those who have sincerely received it; due allowances must be made for the remains of ignorance and prejudice, the power of habit, temper, and constitution, in different persons. The various combinations of these, and other particulars, make each individual character, though agreeing in one common nature, and influenced by the same general principles, in some respects an original. The power and subtlety of Satan, and his address in suiting his temptations to the peculiar inclinations and situation of every person, must be taken into the account: and likewise the immense variety of occasions arising from without, such as, the provocations and arts of enemies, the influence of mistaken friends, the necessary engagements, connections, and relations of common life, the artifices of seducers, and the scandals of false professors. These things, and others which might be named, concur to make the path of duty exceeding difficult, especially to young beginners, who, so soon as they become sincerely desirous to serve the Lord, find themselves immediately in the midst of scenes, in which they can only be fitted to act their parts aright by a gradual and painful experience. They, whose intentions are right, usually set out with warm hearts and sanguine expectations, little aware of the difficulties that are before them: they have indeed a sure rule to act by in the scriptures, and they have a sure promise, that the Spirit of God, will be their guide and teacher; but at first they have but little acquaintance with the scriptures, and until they are humbled, by being left to commit many mortifying mistakes, they are too prone to lean to their own understandings; every day brings them into some new difficulty, wherein they can get little direction from what they have passed through before, and often emergencies are so pressing as hardly to leave room for deliberation: in short, it seems to be the Lord's pleasure, not so much to preserve them from mistakes and indiscretions at first, as to take occasion to humble them upon this account, and to shew them now to correct them when made. Thus they are more confirmed in a sense of their own weakness and of his goodness, and are trained up, by time, observation, and repeated trials, to a more perfect exercise of every branch of christian wisdom by degrees their judgments are formed to greater maturity; they are more jealous of themselves, more acquainted with Satan's devices, more capable of distinguishing the spirit and conduct of mankind, and especially more simply dependent upon God for his teaching and direction; and thus they grow into a participation of the spirit of the gospel, and are enabled to act and speak as becomes the servants of Christ. When his gospel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there always will be some who are able, by the grace of God, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to demean themselves so, that if any will speak evil of them, the shame is retorted upon themselves; but among the numbers who are forming in the same school, there will likewise be some (for the reasons I have suggested) whose conduct will, in some respects, be liable to censure, though their hearts are sincere; and there will frequently be others, who (like the hearers compared by our Lord to seed sown upon rocky ground) will thrust themselves amongst professors, be called by the same name, and accounted by the world the same people, who at length discover themselves to be mere hypocrites: these indeed will furnish occasion enough for exception; and they who are glad to have it so, will readily suppose or pretend that they are all alike. It remains to shew, that in this sense there is no new thing under the sun. It was so from the beginning.

The apostle Paul bears an honourable testimony to the sincerity, zeal, and grace of the believers amongst whom he had preached, and to whom he had written; he commends their work of faith and labour of love; he styles them his joy, his glory, and his crown, and expresses his confidence, that the Lord, who had begun a good work in them, would assuredly complete it: but though he knew there were many persons among them who were well established in the truth, and judicious in their conduct, his admonitions upon several occasions shew there were others, whose judgments were weak and their behaviour unwarrantable.

He speaks of the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 5), as a people enriched in the knowledge of Christ, and honoured with the eminency of gifts; yet he takes notice of many things blameable in them; insomuch that if the people who now censure appearances of a religious kind, because they are not wholly free from imperfection, could have had opportunity to judge of the christians at Corinth in the same spirit, it is probable they would have despised and condemned those whom the apostle loved, as much as they can possibly do any set of people now.

They had first received the gospel from St. Paul, but it had been confirmed to them afterwards by other ministers. The servants of Christ all preach the same truths; but the Holy Spirit, who furnishes them all for the work he appoints them to, distributes to each one severally, according to his own will; he communicates a diversity of gifts, not all to one person, but each has a talent given him

to profit withal; one is favoured with a peculiar insight into the mysteries of the gospel · another has a power and pathos of expression; and another is happy in a facility of applying to distressed and wounded consciences. It is the duty and privilege of christians to avail themselves of these different talents; to profit by each, to be thankful for all, and to esteem every faithful minister very highly for his work's sake. But the Corinthians were unduly influenced by personal attachments, as their several inclinations led them; they formed imprudent comparisons and preferences, were divided into parties, and drawn into contentions upon this account; one saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos, or, I of Cephas (1 Cor. i. 12; and iii. 4): they thought it a mark of zeal to be strenuous for their respective favourites; but St. Paul assured them, that it was a sign they were weak and low in the christian life, and a means to keep them so. Disputes and prepossessions of this kind draw the mind away from its proper nourishment, and afford occasion for the various workings of our selfish passions. Wherever the Lord is pleased to raise up, in or near the same place, ministers who are of eminence in their different gifts, the effects of this spirit will be more or less observable; and it is eagerly observed by the world, and amplified to the utmost, as a weighty objection: the ministers are represented to be artful, designing men; who, under the sacred names of Christ, and the gospel, are aiming chiefly or solely to form a party of dependants upon themselves; and the people are accounted silly sheep, carried away captive by the influence of their popular leaders, insomuch that they cannot, or dare not, receive the doctrines they profess to love from any but their own favourites. The disposition is certainly wrong; but let it be censured with candour, not as the peculiarity of this or that party, but as a fault which human nature is always prone to in similar circumstances: it shewed a want of solid judgment in the Corinthians, but was no impeachment of their sincerity: much less did it prove that Paul, Apollos, or Cephas were mercenary, ambitious men, who prostituted their talents and influence to gain disciples to themselves, rather than to Christ. The same premises will admit of no stronger conclusion now than in the apostles days.

The proper design and tendency of the religion of Jesus is, to wean the affections from the world, to mortify the dictates of self-love, and to teach us (by his example) to be gentle, forbearing, benevolent, and disinterested. This the world is aware of; and though they declare their dislike to the principles which alone can produce such a spirit, they always expect it from the people who profess them; and therefore when, amongst the numbers of these, they can find a few instances of persons too much actuated by selfish, worldly or angry tempers, it is eagerly objected: These are excellent people, if you would judge of them by the length and frequency of their devotions, and by what they have to say of their persuasion of God's love to them; but touch them in their property, and they shew themselves as unwilling to forego, and as anxious to grasp, the good things of this world, as if they had no better claim to heaven than ourselves. It is much to be lamented, that such occasions of reproach are afforded to those who seek them. But what would they have said of the Corinthians, whom the apostle reproves in the following terms: "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another; why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, you do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren," 1 Cor. vi. 7, 8. And, in the preceding chapter, he speaks of an enormity among them, hardly to be heard of among the Heathens, which, though the fault of one person, brought dishonour upon them all, because they had not explicitly disowned it, and proceeded against the offender. This is not to be wondered at; for we have often seen, in our own time, that though evil practices have been censured in the strongest terms of disallowance, and the offenders publicly and notoriously disclaimed, yet many will still be so destitute of candour and equity as to insist on it, they are all alike.

The irregularities in the public worship at Corinth were such, as if practised amongst ourselves, would excite a greater clamour than any thing of that nature which has been hither to complained of. It appears that, far from conducting their assemblies with decency and order, they were sometimes in the greatest confusion: different persons had a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation, many speaking together, and sometimes in different languages; so that the apostle thought it very probable, that, if an unbeliever came in amongst them, he would of course say, they were mad, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. And this want of decorum extended to their celebration of the Lord's supper; where, says the apostle, Every one taketh before another; and one is hungry, and another is drunken, 1 Cor. xi. 21. I apprehend that these instances of disorder cannot be paralleled by the most irregular proceedings in our time, amongst any people that hold the principles which I am at present engaged to vindicate.

Many of the Corinthians, as well as the Galatians,* had discovered great unsteadiness

* Yet he says of the Galatians, that when he first went among them, they received him as an angel of God, and, if possible, would have plucked out their own eyes to have given them to him, Gal. iv. 15. Great is the power of the gospel; it subdues and possesses the heart, and conciliates a tenderness and relation between ministers and people, nearer and dearer than the ties of

towards St. Paul, and had been seduced by false teachers and pretended apostles. Inexperienced minds are very liable to such deceptions: meaning well themselves, they are too apt to listen to the fair words and fine speeches of those who lie in wait to deceive. The love of Christ, and the love of holiness, are the leading properties of a gracious heart, and such a one, till experience has made him wise, conceives a good opinion of all who profess a regard for Jesus, or for sanctification: he is not aware, at first, that there are those in the world who attempt to divide what God has joined together. When the blood and righteousness of Christ are recommended, not as the source, but as a substitute for vital experimental religion; or when some other spirit is preached than that whose office it is to testify of Jesus; in either case the food of the soul is poisoned, and the evil begins to operate before it is perceived. Faithful ministers are accounted too low or too high, too strict or too remiss, according to the scheme newly adopted; they are first disregarded, and at length considered as enemies, because they persist in the truth, and refuse to suit themselves to the new taste of their hearers. Thus error, once admitted, makes an alarming progress: and no power but that of God can stop it. Hence proceed divisions, subdivisions, distinctions, refinements, bitterness, strife,* envyings, and by degrees enthusiasm, in the worst sense of the word: an evil to be dreaded and guarded against no less earnestly than the beginning of a fire or a pestilence. Such trying circumstances will demonstrate who are indeed upon the right foundation; for others, having once begun, depart from the truth, grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; and many who are built upon the rock, and therefore cannot be totally or finally drawn away, yet suffer unspeakable loss; the wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. iii. 10—15), the unadvised additions they have made to the scriptural truths they once received, are burnt up in the time of temptation; they lose much of their comfort and stability, and have in a manner all to begin again. The world, that knows not the weakness of man, or the power and devices of Satan, laughs at those things, and expects to see them issue in a universal confusion, like that of Babel. In the same light, it is most probable, the Heathens beheld and derided the primitive christians: for they likewise had their shaking and sifting times; many amongst them, who seemed to begin in the spirit, were stopped short in their course by the arts of false teachers, to their great hindrance, and some to their final overthrow.

St. Paul addresses no one church in terms of greater tenderness and approbation than the Thessalonians; he commends their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus; and mentions them as a pattern to the other churches in Macedonia and Greece. Yet even among these he understood there were some who walked disorderly, and were busybodies, not working at all; he strongly disapproved their conduct, declaring, that if any would not work, neither should he eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11. When persons are newly awakened to a concern for their souls, and deeply impressed with the importance of eternity, it is no wonder (considering the animal frame) if their attention is so engaged and engrossed for a season, that they cannot attend to the affairs of common life with their usual alacrity and freedom:* if their concern is of a right kind, they are gradually brought to peace and hope in believing; they recover their spirits, and their civil callings being now sanctified by a desire to glorify God in them, their diligence is not less, but frequently greater than before; for now they act not to please men, or to please themselves, but what they do, they do heartily as to the Lord. However, amongst a number of people, natural temper, indiscretion, or inadvertance, may cause some to deviate from the general rule; and though we cannot justify any who are remiss in the discharge of the relative duties of society, we may justify the doctrines and principles they acknowledge, from the charge of leading them into this mistake, unless it can be proved that St. Paul's preaching was justly chargeable with the same fault.

But these are small things compared to what he says in another place. He complains to the Philippians in this affecting language (Phil. iii. 18, 19): "Many walk (not some only, but many), of whom I have told you

flesh and blood. But alas! how great likewise is the inconstancy of mortals! the apostle experienced it to his grief; and where he had the greatest prospect, he was most disappointed: those who once would have plucked out their own eyes for his service, afterwards accounted him their enemy, for telling them the truth. We need not therefore wonder if there are instances of this kind at present.

* That bitterness and strife were too frequent in the primitive churches, appears from James iii. 14.; Gal. v. 15.; and other texts. Our Lord's admonition, Matth. vii. 3—5. has always been too little regarded; and few are yet sufficiently convinced of the folly and absurdity of pointing out, and in an angry spirit condemning, the mistakes and faults of others, while we indulge greater in ourselves. Reformation (like modern charity) should begin at home.

* See James iv. 9. The word λυπηρια rendered *heaviness*, answers nearest to *dejection*; the derivation importing a downcast countenance; and it expresses that kind of sorrow which sinks the spirits, and fixes the eye upon the earth. Something of this is usually discernable when a real conviction of sin takes place in the heart. The inspired apostle recommends this temper and demeanour as most suitable to the case of sinners who are destitute of faith and love, and cannot therefore rejoice upon good grounds; and yet when any person begins to be impressed in this manner, and to see the propriety of the apostle's advice, it frequently happens, that all who know him, both friends and enemies, will agree to pronounce him disordered in his senses. So different, so opposite, are the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the world!

often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ,* whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things." St. Paul had occasion to express himself thus, and that again and again, even in the golden days of primitive christianity. Could their worst enemies have given them a worse character? Can even malice itself desire to fix a harsher imputation upon any denomination of people now subsisting? Yet these are the words of truth and soberness, the words of an inspired apostle, the words not of resentment but of grief: he spoke of it weeping; he would willingly have hoped better things; but he knew what tempers and practices were inconsistent with a sincere acceptance of the gospel; and, unless he would shut his eyes, and stop his ears, he could not but be sensible that many who were reputed christians dishonoured the name of christianity, and caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of. Now, what is the consequence? Shall the apostle bear the blame of the evils and abominations he lamented?† for, if he had not preached, these evils would not have appeared under the christian name. Shall the wickedness of his pretended followers be charged as the necessary effect of that pure and heavenly doctrine which he had delivered? By no means. The grace of God, which he preached, taught and enabled those who received it in their hearts to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. If inquiry was made concerning the tendency of his doctrine, he could apppeal to the tempers and lives of multitudes (1 Cor. iii. 2, 3), who had been thereby delivered from the love and power of sin, and filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. But it was likewise true that they were still encumbered with a depraved nature: they were in a world full of temptations and snares; and as their numbers were very great, some instances had occurred of persons sincerely well disposed, who had too visibly declined from the rule by which they professed and desired to walk. Against their mistakes and faults he watchfully directed his exhortations and admonitions, as occasions offered; and they were generally attended with a good effect, to convince, humble, and restore the offenders (2 Cor. vii. 9), and to increase their circumspection for the time to come. It was true likewise that there were some gathered by the preacing of the gospel into the number of professors, who were not effectually called and changed by the Spirit of God. These, though for a time they had a name to live, were no better than dead; and one reason why the Lord permitted the offences and divisions we have mentioned to take place was that, by the means of such heresies, those that were approved might be made manifest, and the chaff separated from the wheat; for though the ignorant world would call even those persons christians, whose conduct proved them enemies to the cross of Christ, yet time, the test of truth, unanswerably evinced the difference. Thus St. John, who lived some years after the rest of the apostles, and saw many turn their backs upon the teachers and doctrines they had once owned, has observed to this purpose:—"They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John ii. 19. In a word, there were too many pretenders; some things amiss where the heart and views were right in the main, and imperfections in the best: the scorners and cavillers, who hated the light of the gospel, and were always in search of something to confirm their prejudices against it, met with much answerable to their wishes, even in the first and best churches; but to men of candour, who were ingenuous seekers of the truth, the spirituality, humility, and brotherly love that prevailed among the christians, and the powerful effects of their public ordinances, demonstrated that the truth was on their side, and that God was assuredly with them.

We offer the same apology, the same train of reasoning in behalf of what is now so generally deemed the foolishness of preaching. The doctrines we defend, which some (who cannot do it ignorantly) have the effrontery to misrepresent as novel opinions, are, we doubt not, the doctrines of Christ and his apostles; and in substance the doctrines taught from the word of God by Wickliffe, Luther, and the venerable reformers of our own church. We preach Christ crucified, Christ the end of the law for righteousness, and the power of God for sanctification to every one that believeth; we preach salvation by grace through faith in his blood; and we are sure that they who receive this doctrine unfeignedly will, by their lives and conversations, demonstrate it to be a doctrine according to godliness: they are not indeed delivered from infirmities, they are liable to mistakes and indiscretions, and see more amiss in themselves than their worst enemies can charge them with; but sin is their burden; they sigh to be delivered from it, and they

* What disagreeable things the apostle was apprehensive of meeting, when he should revisit Corinth, we may learn from 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21.

† The apostle knew that some did, or would presume to infer a liberty to sin from the doctrine which he preached (Rom. vi. 1), yet he would not suppress or disguise the truths of God to prevent such a poor disingenuous perversion: he knew likewise that no one who had tasted that the Lord is gracious, can either form such a conclusion himself, or listen to it if proposed by others; therefore he thought it unnecessary to refute it at large. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! This is a sufficient answer. Thus absurd blasphemy exposes and confutes itself: the terms are inconsistent, impossible, and contradictory in the highest degree.

expect a complete redemption. We cannot indeed say so much for all who outwardly avow a belief of this doctrine: there are pretenders who, while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny him. But it has been so from the beginning. The miscarriages of such persons are charged indiscriminately upon the societies among whom they are mixed, and upon the truths which they seem to approve; but there is a righteous God, who in due time will vindicate his own gospel, and his own people from all aspersions. St. Paul observed such things in his day, and he spoke of them likewise, but he spoke of them weeping. The true state of the mind may be determined from the temper with which the miscarriages of professors are observed. The profane expatiate on them with delight, the self-righteous with disdain; but they who know themselves, and love the Lord, cannot speak of them without the sincerest emotions of grief: they are concerned for the honour of the gospel, which is defamed under this pretence; they are grieved for the unhappy and dangerous state of those by whom such offences come, and they fear for themselves, lest the enemy should gain an advantage over them likewise, for they know they have no strength nor goodness of their own; therefore, avoiding unnecessary reflections on others, they endeavour to maintain a watchful jealousy over themselves, and to fix their hearts and hopes upon Christ Jesus their Lord, who, they are persuaded, is able to keep them from falling, to save them to the uttermost, and at length to present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

CHAP. IV

OF THE HERESIES PROPAGATED BY FALSE TEACHERS IN THE APOSTLES DAYS.

THE parables in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew are prophetical of the reception and event of the gospel in succeeding ages. In this view our Lord himself has explained them. Wherever it is preached, the hearers may be classed according to the distribution in the parable of the sower. some hear without understanding or reflection; in some it excites a hasty emotion in the natural affections, and produces an observable and sudden change in their conduct, resembling the effects of a real conversion to God; but the truth not being rooted in the heart, nor the soul united to Christ by a living faith, these hopeful appearances are sooner or later blasted, and come to nothing: others are really convinced in their judgment of the truth and importance of what they hear, but their hearts cleave to the dust, and the love of this world, the care of what they have, the desire of what they have not, the calls of business, or the solicitations of pleasure, choke the word which they seem to receive, so that it brings forth no fruit to perfection: a part, however (usually the smallest part), who are compared to the good ground, are disposed and enabled, by divine grace, to receive it thankfully, as life from the dead. And though they meet with many difficulties, and, like the corn upon the ground, pass through a succession of trying and changing seasons, yet, having the love, promise, and power of God engaged on their behalf, in defiance of frosts, and blasts, and storms, they are brought to maturity, and, when fully ripe, are safely gathered into his garner, Matth. iii. 12. This is an epitome of the ecclesiastical history of every nation, and of every parish, to which this word of salvation is sent.

But the parable of the tares (Matth. xiii. 12.) teaches us farther to expect, that besides the general influence which Satan, as the God of this world, will exert to blind the eyes of mankind, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine upon them (2 Cor. iv. 4.), he will take occasion, from the knowledge of the truth, to insinuate a variety of errors. His first attempts in this way are often so specious unsuspected, that they are compared to a man's sowing seed by stealth, and in the night, but, as the corn grew, a large crop of tares springing up with it, demonstrated that an enemy had been there. This, in fact, has been universally the case, in every country and age where the gospel has been received; and we may remark, that the sowing the good seed was the occasion of the tares being cast into the same ground. When a people are involved in gross darkness and ignorance, sleeping in a false peace, and buried in the pleasures and pursuits of the world, they have neither leisure, nor inclination, to invent or attend to novelties in religion; each one is satisfied with that form (if even the form of godliness is retained) which he has received from his parents, and neither pretends nor desires to be wiser than those who went before him: but when the truth has shone forth and been received, and seems to bid fair for farther success, Satan employs all his power and subtilty, either to suppress or counterfeit it or both. Much has been done in the former way; he has prevailed so far as to enkindle the fiercest animosities against the nearest relatives, and persuaded men that they might do acceptable service to God, by punishing his faithful servants with torture, fire, and sword (John xvi. 2.): and no less industrious and successful has he been in practising upon the passions and prejudices of mankind to admit and propagate, instead of the gospel of Christ, and under that name, an endless diversity of opinions, utterly incompatible with it. Of these some are ingenious and artful,

adapted to gratify the pride of those who are wise in their own conceits; others more gross and extravagant, suited to inflame the imaginations, or to gratify the appetites of such persons as have not a turn for speculation and refinement.

As these appearances have always accompanied the gospel, so they have always been a stumbling-block and offence to the world, and have furnished those who hated the light with a pretext for rejecting it: and the doctrines of truth have been charged as the source and cause of those errors which have only sprung from their abuse and perversion. When Popery, for a series of ages, detained mankind in darkness and bondage, and deprived them of the knowlege of the holy scriptures, the tide of error ran uniformly in one great channel; when dead works were substituted in the place of living faith; and the worship and trust which is only due to Jesus the great Mediator, was blasphemously directed to subordinate intercessors, to angels and to saints, whether real or pretended; when forgiveness of sin was expected, not by the blood of Christ, but by penances, pilgrimages, masses, and human absolutions, by the repetition of many prayers, or the payment of sums of money; while things continued thus, the world was generally in that state of stupidity and blind security which is miscalled religious peace and uniformity; and the controversies of the times were chiefly confined to those points which immediately affected the power, wealth, or pre-eminence of the several religious orders by whom the people were implicitly led. Some differences of opinion were indeed known; but the charge of heresy and dangerous innovations was seldom so much as pretended against any, but the few who refused to wear the mark of the beast upon their right hands and foreheads, and who, by the mercy of God, retained and professed the main truths of christianity in some degree of power and purity. But when it pleased God to revive the knowledge of the gospel, by the ministry of Luther and his associates, and many were turned from darkness to light, the enemy of mankind presently changed his methods, and, by his influence, the sowing of the good seed was followed by tares in abundance. In the course of a few years, the glory of the Reformation was darkened, and its progress obstructed, by the enthusiasm and infatuation of men, who, under a pretence of improving upon Luther's plan, propagated the wildest, most extravagant and blasphemous opinions, and perpetrated, under the mask of religion, such acts of cruelty, villany, and licentiousness, as have been seldom heard of in the world. The papists beheld these excesses with pleasure: many of them could not but know that Luther, and the heads of the Reformation, did all that could be expected from them, to shew the folly and iniquity of such proceedings; but, against the light of truth and fact, they laboured to persuade the world, that these were the necessary consequences of Luther's doctrine; and that no better issue could be justly hoped for when men presumed to depart from the authorised standards of popes and councils, and to read and examine the scriptures for themselves.

This religious madness was, however, of no long duration: the people who held tenets inconsistent with the peace of society, were deservedly treated as rebels and incendiaries by the governing powers; the ringleaders were punished, and the multitudes dispersed; their most obnoxious errors were gradually abandoned, and are now in a manner forgot. After the peace of Passau, the Reformation acquired an establishment in Germany, and other places; and since that time, error has assumed a milder form, and has been supported by softer methods, and more respectable names.

In our own country, the same spirit of enthusiasm and disorder has appeared at different times, though it has been restrained by the providence of God, from proceeding to the same extremities, and has been most notorious, when, or soon after, the power of gospel-truth has been more eminently revived; for, as I have already observed, when religion is upon the decline, and only so much of a profession retained as is consistent with the love of the present world, and a conformity to the maxims and practices of the many, we seldom hear of any errors prevailing, but such as will find a favourable toleration, and may be avowed without exciting very strong and general expressions of contempt and ill-will against those who maintain them. But whenever real religion, as a life of faith in the Son of God, is set forth upon the principles of scripture, and, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, witnesses are raised up, who by their conduct demonstrate that they are crucified with Christ, to the law, to sin, and to the world, then is the time for Satan to discredit this work, by imposing a variety of false views and appearances upon the minds of the ignorant and unwary; and he is seldom at a loss for fit instruments to promote his designs. Since the late revival of the Reformation doctrines amongst us, we have perhaps fewer things of this kind to apologize for, than have been observable on any similar occasion; and the best apology we can offer for what has been really blameable, is, to shew that it was even thus in the apostles days; and that, if any arguments taken from these blemishes are conclusive against what some chuse to call the novel doctrines now, they would, with equal reason, conclude against the validity of the New Testament.

And not to confine myself to such things as the world is most prone to except against, I shall endeavour to shew, that the seeds of all errors and heresies, the fashionable as well as

those which are more generally despised, were sown in the first age, and appeared so early as to give occasion for the apostles censures against them. I do not mean by this to parallel every name and every singularity that a subtle head or a warm imagination may have started; but to assign, in general, the principles to which all these delusions may be reduced, the sources to which these inebriating and dangerous streams may be traced: for, indeed, the operations of the human mind seem to be much more simple and limited than we are ordinarily aware. As there can be no new truths, though every truth appears new to us which we have not known before, so it is probable, that there can be now no new errors; at least it is certain, that a competent knowledge of antiquity, or even a careful perusal of the apostles writings, will furnish sufficient evidence, that some modern authors and teachers are by no means the inventors of the ingenious schemes they have presented to the public. Truth, like the sun, maintains a constant course; every thing would stagnate and die if we were deprived of it for a single day; but errors are like comets; which, though too eccentric to be subject exactly to our computations, yet have their periods of approach and recess, and some of them have appeared and been admired, have been withdrawn and forgot, over and over again.

Error, in the simplest form, is a misapprehension of the truth. Some part of the gospel must be known before any erroneous conceptions of it can take place. Thus we read (Acts viii. 9—22), that Simon Magus was struck with Philip's preaching, and the effects which attended it: he was so far impressed, that it is said he believed: that is, he made a profession of faith; he was convinced there was something extraordinary in the doctrine, but he understood it not: and the event shewed he had no part nor lot in the matter. He is thought by the ancients to have been the founder of that capital sect, which is known in general by the name of Gnostics, and which, like a gangrene, spread far and wide, in various branches and subdivisions; each successive head refining upon the system of the preceding. In Sir Peter King's History of the Apostles Creed, and Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, the English reader may see the substance of the figments which these unhappy men, wise in their own conceit, vented under the name of the christian religion.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ, and of him crucified, which St. Paul preached, and in which he gloried, is the pillar and ground of truth, the rock upon which the church is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, 1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Matth. xvi. 18. Mistakes in this point are fundamental, dangerous, and, if persisted in, destructive; for as such a knowledge of God as is connected with his favour and communion is eternal life, so none can come to the Father but by the Son (John xvii. 3; and xiv. 6), nor can any know him, but those to whom the Son will reveal him, Matth. xi. 27. On this account Satan's great endeavour (and on his success herein the strength of his kingdom depends) is to darken and pervert the minds of men, lest they should acknowledge and understand what the scriptures declare of his person, character, and offices, as well knowing, that if these are set aside, whatever else is left of religion will be utterly unavailing. Jesus Christ is revealed in the scriptures, and was preached by his first disciples, as God manifest in the flesh, a divine person in the human nature, who, by submitting to ignominy, pain, and death, made a full and proper atonement for sin, and wrought out an everlasting righteousness in favour of all who should believe in his name; and he is set forth in that nature in which he suffered, as the object of our supreme love, trust, and adoration. Other important doctrines, largely insisted on in the word of God, such as the demerit of sin, the obnoxiousness of sinners to punishment, and the misery and incapacity of man in his fallen state, are closely connected with this, and cannot be satisfactorily explained without it. The necessary method of our recovery exhibits the most striking view of the ruin in which sin has involved us, and is the only adequate standard whereby to estimate the unspeakable love of God manifested in our redemption. On the other hand, a knowledge of the true state of mankind, in consequence of the fall, is necessary to obviate the prejudices of our minds against a procedure, which, though in itself the triumph of divine wisdom, is in many respects contradictory to our natural, and therefore false, notions of the fitness of things. St. Paul declares, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he discern them (1 Cor. ii. 14.); and in another place, that no man can say (that is, sincerely, and upon solid conviction) that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. xii. 3. To worship him who had been hanged on a cross, and to expect eternal happiness from his death, was to the Jews a stumbling-block; it offended their notions of the unity of the godhead, and opposed their high esteem of their own righteousness; and to the Greeks, or Heathens, it appeared the greatest folly and absurdity imaginable. For these reasons the gospel was rejected by multitudes as soon as proposed, and those who preached it were accounted babblers and madmen, not because they were at a loss for propriety of expression, or discovered any thing ridiculous

in their conduct, but because they enforced tenets which were adjudged inconsistent with the common sense of mankind.

But, notwithstanding these prejudices, the energy of their preaching, and the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied, made an impression upon many persons, so far as to induce them to profess the name of Jesus, though they were not spiritually enlightened into the mysteries of his religion, nor their hearts thoroughly subdued to the obedience of the faith. There are other points within the compass of the gospel-ministry more adapted to affect the minds of men in their natural state. Few are so hardened, but they have a conscience of sin, some fears with respect to its consequences, and a pre-intimation of immortality. Such are capable of being greatly affected and moved by a pathetic declaration of the terrors of the Lord, the solemnities of a future judgment, the joys of heaven, or the torments of hell. We cannot doubt that these topics, when insisted on with that strength of argument and warmth of spirit, of which the apostles were capable, would engage the attention of many who were not partakers of that divine light, by which alone the whole scheme of truth, in its harmony and beauty, can be perceived. The seed sown upon the rock sprang up immediately, the quickness of its growth, and the suddenness of its decay, proceeding from the same cause, a want of depth in the soil. Not a few of these hasty believers presently renounced the faith altogether, and others, who went not so far as to disown the name, endeavoured to accommodate the doctrine to their prepossessions, and to explain or reject what they could not understand, in such a manner as to form a system upon the whole agreeable to their own wills. Men of corrupt and prejudiced minds thus tampered with the truth; and their inventions, when made known, were adopted by others of the same cast of thought: as they were differently inclined, they directed their inquiries to different points, and each found partizans and adherents in their respective ways. Thus errors, and, in consequence, sects and divisions, were multiplied; for when men depart from the unerring guidance of God's word, there is no end of their imaginations; one singularity produces another, and every new leader is stimulated to carry his discoveries farther than those who have gone before him. Farther, as human nature is universally the same, we may judge from what we have seen, that there always have been persons inclined to join in a religious profession, from the unworthy motives of worldly interest, and a desire to stand fair with their fellow-creatures. Temptations to this were not so strong indeed at first, nor so general, as they have often been since; yet the force of friendship, relation (and when christianity had been of some years standing), education, custom, and human authority, is very considerable: nor is even persecution a sufficient bar against hypocrites and intruders. They who suffer for the gospel, though despised by the world, are highly esteemed and considered by their own side; it procures them an attention which they would not have otherwise obtained; it may give them an importance in their own eyes, furnish them with something to talk of, and make them talked of by others. There are people who, for the sake of these advantages, will, for a season, venture upon many hardships, though, when the trial comes very close, they will not endure to the end. In a word, there is no reason to doubt but that, amongst the numbers who professed the gospel at first, there would be found the same variety of tempers, circumstances, views, and motives, as have ordinarily appeared amongst a great number of people, suddenly formed in any other period of time; and the apostles writings prove that it was really so. From these general principles, we may easily account for the early introduction and increase of errors and heresies, and that they should be in a manner the same as they have sprung up with, or followed succeeding revivals of the truth. Nor is it just cause of surprise, if sincere christians have been, in some instances, entangled in the prevailing errors of the times: designing no harm themselves, they suspect none, and are therefore liable to be imposed on by those who lie in wait to deceive, Ephes. iv. 14.

When christianity first appeared, the Heathen wisdom, known by the name of Philosophy, was in the highest repute: it had two principal branches, the Grecian and the Eastern. The former admitted (at least did not condemn) a multiplicity and subordination of deities; amongst whom, as agents and mediators between their supreme Jupiter and mortals, the care and concerns of mankind were subdivided, to each of which homage and sacrifices were due: their mythology, or the pretended history of their divinities, was puerile and absurd, and many of their religious rites inconsistent with the practice of public decorum and good morals. Some of the philosophers endeavoured to guard against the worst abuses, and to form a system of religion and morality, in which they seem to have proceeded as far as could be expected from men who were totally ignorant of the true God, and of their own state: some truths they were acquainted with, truths in theory, but utterly impracticable upon any principles but those of revelation. Amongst a vast number of opinions concerning the chief good of man, a few held, that man's honour and happiness must consist in conformity to, and communion with, God; but how to attain these desirable ends, they were entirely ignorant.

The eastern philosophy was solemn and mys-

terious, and not less fabulous than the other; but the fables were of a graver cast. It seemed to mourn under the sense of moral evil, and laboured in vain to account for its entrance: its precepts were gloomy and severe; and a perfect course of bodily mortification was recommended as the great expedient to purify the soul from all its defilements, and to reunite it, by degrees, to its great Author.

St. Paul, in several passages (Col. ii. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 20.), cautions the christians against corrupting the simplicity of their faith, by admitting the reasoning and inventions of vain men. In some places (1 Tim. i. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 9.) he seems to speak more directly of the Gnostics, whose heresies were little more than the fables of the eastern philosophy, in a new dress, with an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as an extraordinary person, yet so as utterly to exclude and deny all the important truths revealed in the scriptures concerning him. They dignified their scheme with the name of Gnosis, or Science; but it was falsely so called, and stood in direct opposition to the gospel. On other occasions (Rom. i. 21—23; 1 Cor. i. 20—23.) he appears to have had the Grecian philosophy chiefly in view. But, notwithstanding his admonitions, it was not long before the errors of philosophy had an ill influence upon the professors of the christian faith; and even several of the fathers darkened the glory of the truth, by endeavouring to accommodate it to the taste and genius of that Heathen wisdom which they had before admired, and still thought might be useful to embellish and recommend the gospel.

But to confine myself to the apostles times, it is plain, from the epistles of St. Paul, John, Jude, and Peter (Tit. i. 10; 1 John, iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19; Jude, 4.) that many false prophets and teachers had, in their days, crept in, who propagated damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, turning the grace of God into licentiousness, speaking great swelling words of vanity, boasting themselves of freedom, while they were in bondage to their own lusts. And in the epistle to the church of Ephesus (Rev. ii. 6), our Lord himself mentions a sect, who bore the name of Nicolaitans, and expresses his disapprobation of them in these awful terms: "Whom I also hate!" The peculiar tenets of the people condemned in these passages of scripture are not expressly mentioned; but from these sources were most probably derived the sects which, in the second century, were known by the names of their several leaders, Cerinthus, Saturninus, Cerdo, Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus, and others: who all, building upon the common foundation of the eastern philosophy, or Gnosis, superadded their own peculiarities, and were differently, though equally, remote from the truth. The one thing in which they all agreed was, in perverting and opposing the scripture-doctrine concerning the person of Christ. On this point their opinions were as discordant as absurd: some denied that Christ was come in the flesh; they pretended that Christ was sent from heaven by the supreme God, and united himself to Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism; and that, when the Jews apprehended the man Jesus, and nailed him to the cross, Christ returned to heaven, and left him to suffer by himself. Others ascribed a heavenly derivation to his body, affirming that it passed through the Virgin Mary, without any participation of her substance; while others asserted, that he had no substantial flesh; but that his body was a mere phantom, or apparition, which was neither really born, nor did or could truly suffer. Again, there were others who held the reality of his human nature, yet maintained, that Christ did not suffer at all, but that Simon of Cyrene, the bearer of his cross, being taken by the Jews for him, was crucified in his stead, while he stood by, and laughed at their mistake. A brief recital of these extravagancies is sufficient for my present purpose: for a more particular account, I refer the reader to Sir Peter King's History of the Creed, already mentioned. Many passages in the apostles writings are directed against these dangerous errors; for they strike at the root of the faith and hope of the gospel, and are subversive of the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament. It was believed by the ancients, that St. John wrote his gospel with some view to these heresies; and it is certain that, in his first epistle, where, putting the disciples upon their guard against the many false prophets who were gone out into the world, he observes, that the common point, in which all their divers opinions agreed, was a denial that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, 1 John, ii. 22, and iv. 3. He reminds them, that as they had heard Antichrist must come, even so now there were many Antichrists; and that the name was applicable to all who denied that Jesus is the Christ. He admits that these false teachers went out from amongst themselves, that is, they had borne the christian name; but he refers to the doctrines they taught, as a sufficient proof that they had never been of the number of true christians; for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us, 1 John, ii. 19. If opinions, equally wild and extravagant, were at this time maintained and propagated by persons who, for a season, had been warm for truth and reformation, we are not afraid that they would prejudice our cause with any who will allow due weight to the reasoning of St. John; for if they had been really of us once, they would have still continued with us.

But the truth is, the teachers in our time, whose leading tenets most nearly symboliae

with these ancient heresies, are not charged, or even suspected of having had any attachment to the doctrines which I am concerned to vindicate; nor is an apology expected from them, for they gave but little offence. Since the fabulous disguise, under which the Gnostics of old veiled their opinions, has been laid aside, their opposition to the deity and atonement of Christ has been adopted by so many who are applauded for ingenuity, fine reasoning, and great learning, that it bids fair to be the fashionable divinity of the age; and though the sufferings of Jesus are not denied, yet their proper causes and ends are openly exploded; and the attempt has often proved an easy path to acceptance, wealth, and dignity.

The attachment of the Jewish converts to the law of Moses was another source of error, which occasioned daily disputes in the churches, and gave rise, in the issue, to dangerous heresies, subversive of the true faith. Even those of them who had sincerely received the gospel, could not easily be persuaded, that a law given to Moses by God himself, with so much solemnity, from Mount Sinai, was to be entirely abrogated; and that their obligation to it was, *ipso facto*, vacated the moment they believed in Jesus, who, by his obedience unto death, had accomplished all its types and ceremonies, and wrought out for his people an everlasting righteousness commensurate to its utmost requirements. The apostles, who, after the pattern of their Lord, were gentle and tender to the weak of the flock, bore with their infirmities (Rom. xiv. 2. 6.), and allowed them to retain a distinction of meats, and days, and other observances, provided they did not consider these things in such a point of view as to interfere with God's appointed method of justication by faith in his Son. But the matter was carried much farther; for no sooner was there a church formed at Antioch, than they were troubled with perverse teachers (Acts xv. 1.) who told them, that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. The Galatians were greatly hurt by teachers of this sort (Gal. v. 4.); and as the Jews were dispersed through all the provinces, the peace of the church was more or less affected by their attempts to enforce the observance of the law, in almost every place, till after the epistle to the Hebrews was received, and obedience to the Levitical law rendered impracticable by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, Col. ii 16. Tit. i. 10. Phil. iii. 2. 1 Tim. i. 7. From that period, it is probable, the distinction of Jew and Gentile believers ceased, and both parties were firmly incorporated into one body: but a great number of the zealots for the law separated themselves, and were known in the following age by the name of Ebionites, adopting for their rule a mixture of law and gospel, so very different from the gospel St. Paul preached, that they openly expressed an abhorrence both of his person and writings.

We have an account likewise of some pretended teachers, who opposed the important doctrine of the resurrection. Some expressly maintained, that there was no resurrection, whom St. Paul confutes at large, in the 15th chap. of his first epistle to the Corinthians. Others affirmed that the resurrection was past already, 2 Tim. 18. Perhaps they pretended that a moral change was designed by the metaphorical expression of a ressurection. The philosophers had used the word in this sense: and this would be sufficient to gain it admittance with some, who would willingly reconcile their profession to the wisdom of the world. In either way the very foundations of hope were removed. If this point is denied, the whole system of christian doctrine falls to the ground; and that dreadful train of consequences must be admitted, which the apostle enumerates in 1 Cor. xv. 14. 18. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain, ye are yet in your sins; then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Since the fertile resurrection of ancient mistakes, which is the sin and scandal of the present age, we have been gravely told, that the word signifies no more than the soul's awaking from the long sleep into which they suppose the period we call death will plunge it; and that the body has no share in the revival, but dies without hope: but we may thank God for the scriptures, which brings comfort where philosophy gives up the cause as desperate. Faith in Christ is so closely connected with the doctrine of a resurrection, that it is common with those who oppose the former to use all their address to explain the latter quite away; and whether they say, it is past already, or, that it will never come, their motives, their design, and their manner of reasoning, are the same.

That there were persons who abused the doctrines of grace, as an encouragement to continue in the practice of sin, may be inferred from the epistle of St. James, and several passages of the other apostles. Such, in our modern phrase, are styled Antinomians; a name, it must be confessed, of very indeterminate application: it is an epithet, which many would fix, indiscriminately, upon all who preach a free salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus. If it is all of grace, and we can do no thing of ourselves; if it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; then we may live as we please, endeavours are useless, and obedience unnecessary, Rom. xi. 6. and ix. 16. 2 Cor. iii. 5. These are the inferences which the unenlightened heart charges as unavoidable consequences from the gospel-doctrine; and from hence we obtain a corroborating proof, that we do not mistake St. Paul's sense or

preach a gospel different from his, because he foresaw that the same objections would seem to lie against himself (Rom. iii. 7. and ix. 19.); and he guards and protests against such a perversion, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid," Rom. vi. 1. It seems to have been upon this account that he was slandered, and by some affirmed to have taught, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. iii. 8.); that is, in modern language (and such things are not spoken in corners amongst us), If any man would be a proper subject of what they call grace, let him become still more vile, and plunge into the most atrocious wickedness; for the greater the sinner, the better qualified for mercy. We are content to be reproached, as St. Paul was in his time, for the truth's sake; and we would be chiefly concerned for the unhappy scoffers, who, unless God is pleased to give them repentance unto life, will one day wish they had been idiots, or lunatics, rather than have vented their malicious wit against the grace and gospel of the Lord Christ. But it must be allowed, we have seen Antinomians in the worst sense of the word, men who have pleaded for sin, and while they have laid claim to faith, have renounced and blasphemed that holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord. We cannot wonder, that even candid and well-meaning persons have been greatly prejudiced and discouraged in their inquiries after truth, by the presumption and wickedness of such pretended christians. But no period of the church, in which the gospel-doctrine was known and preached, has been free from offences of this sort. It was so in the apostles days. There were then many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers, who subverted whole houses, teaching things which they ought not (Tit. i. 10. 11.); who professed that they knew God, but in works denied him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate (Tit. i. 16.); who pretended to faith, but were destitute of those fruits which true faith always produces, James ii. 14. These are described (Jude 12, 13), as clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the root; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever; sporting themselves with their own deceivings, and beguiling unstable souls, 2 Pet. ii. 13. 14. In opposition to such deceivers, it is written, If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth, 1 John i. 6. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 John ii. 4. For every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure, 1 John iii. 3. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians concerning the man of sin (2 Thess. ii. 3—10), who was to be fully revealed in the following ages, reminds them, that the mystery of iniquity, though at that time restrained from a full manifestation, did already work; teaching us, that the seeds of that grand apostacy, which at length overspread the whole professing church, were sown, and springing up, at the time of his writing. And he mentions several particulars in his epistle to the Colossians (chap. ii. 18—23); such as a voluntary, or self-devised humility, in worshipping angels as mediators or intercessors; a dogmatic inhibition of things which God had left free; and a specious scheme of will-worship and mortification, which, under pretence of self-denial, did really gratify pride, vanity, and self-righteousness. The progress of our history will shew what a harvest of dreadful and wide-spreading evils were produced from these principles, until at length the gospel of Christ was wholly obscured, and the lives and consciences of men were given up to the power of Antichrist, who, as God, insolently sat down in the temple of God, and exalted himself above all laws, human and divine. It is sufficient to my purpose at present, to take notice, that the beginnings of that spiritual infatuation, which so long detained the world in chains, and darkness, and slavery, under the tyranny of the church of Rome, were observable in St. Paul's time, and therefore deserve a place in the list of those pestilent heresies by which the enemy of souls attempted to defile the faith, and disturb the peace, of the primitive church.

Many other things are alluded to, which, for want of authentic records of the first century, we cannot with certainty explain. Besides the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, already mentioned, we read of the blasphemy of them who said they were Jews but were not, but of the synagogue of Satan (Rev. iii. 9); of them who held the doctrine of Balaam, and of the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, Rev. ii. 14, 20. These were certainly heretics: for our Lord severely rebukes the churches for not opposing them to the utmost; and, as he gives different names, they probably differed from each other, though their ultimate tendency was the same, to pervert the faith of the hearers, and to introduce licentiousness of practice. The gospel-truth is a doctrine according to godliness, and has a sanctifying influence; for the grace of God teaches all who are partakers of it, to forsake all ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world, Titus ii. 11, 12. But errors and heresies, in whatever degree they prevail, have poisonous effects upon those who admit them

some are calculated to set aside the whole frame of obedience which we owe to our God and Saviour, and the most refined and plausible will deliver the soul into the power of some easy, besetting, and beloved sin, and furnish arms and arguments to maintain it. And this explains what would otherwise seem a very strange phenomenon. When the truth is proposed with the greatest clearness, and the greatest advantages, its votaries, at all times, and in all places, have been but few; but whoever will stand up on the side of error, however wild and absurd his opinions and conduct may be, will hardly fail of obtaining adherents. It is because error will tolerate those lusts and follies which truth will not endure; and in the present state of human depravity, more people will be found willing to give up their understandings, than to part with their sins.

We may likewise collect from several texts in the epistles, that there were those of old who denied what the scriptures teach concerning the depravity of human nature, the real guilt of sin (1 John i. 8, 10); the influences of the Holy Spirit (Jude 19), and the terrors of a future judgment (2 Pet. iii. 9), though we cannot be sure that these doctrines were opposed so openly and so strenuously as they are in our own days. But I have enumerated enough to answer my purpose by way of apology for the evangelical doctrine, the modern opposers of the last mentioned points not being under any suspicion or charge of what is called enthusiasm; and all who are despised or persecuted for resting the hope of their salvation solely on the mediation of Jesus and his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, are known to acknowledge them as essential truths; indeed, they stand inseparably connected with what they believe of his person, offices, power, and grace. A conscience impressed with the majesty, holiness, and justice of the great God, and that trembles at the denunciations of his law against every transgression, dares not hope for peace without the discovery of an adequate atonement for sin, nor venture its eternal concerns upon the interposition of a creature. To such a one, all that is revealed of the love and sufferings of Jesus, would afford no solid ground of consolation, if the infinite dignity of his divine nature, and his voluntary substitution in the place, and on the behalf of sinners, were not revealed with equal clearness; and a conviction of that total insufficiency for every good work (2 Cor. iii. 5), and the prevalence of indwelling sin (Rom. vii. 18—34), which the scriptures so expressly declare to be the condition of every child of Adam, would plunge an awakened mind into hopeless despair, if it was not relieved by the gracious promise of the infallible Spirit (John xiv. 26, and xvi. 7, 13), whose office is to teach, guide, comfort, and seal the children of God unto the day of complete redemption (Ephes. iv. 30); but having such a great high priest (Heb. vii. 1, and ix. 24, and x. 19), who, by his own blood, has entered into the holy place, to appear in the presence of God for us, and having, in the promise of the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 16, 26, 27), a source of succour and comfort answerable to all our ignorance, weakness, necessities, and temptations, we are enabled, in the midst of fightings and fears (2 Cor. vii. 5), to maintain a humble confidence that we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming, but have boldness in the day of judgment, the great and terrible day of the Lord, 1 John ii. 28, and iv. 17. On the other hand, it is no wonder that those, who do not acknowledge the deity of the Saviour (not finding any other basis whereon to rest the validity of an atonement for sin), should embrace every shadow of an argument against its necessity, and be willing to think as highly as possible of their own righteousness and abilities; or, that being thus persuaded that they can please God, without the influence of his Spirit, themselves, they should treat all claims to this assistance in others as enthusiasm and folly. Nor can we be surprised, that many who reject the scripture-testimony concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit, should use all their address to prove, that the soul sinks into sleep and inactivity at death, that the resurrection of the flesh is improbable, and that it is injurious to the goodness of God, to suppose he will inflict eternal punishment for sins committed within the compass of a short life. Such reasonings may be expected from men, who presume upon the sufficiency of their own wisdom, who neither expect nor desire divine teaching, and who find a little relief in these sentiments, against the fears and forebodings which will sometimes force themselves upon their minds.

It appears, however, from the indisputable evidence of the New Testament, that, in the first age of the church, the enemy sowed the tares of error and heresy in great abundance, and that the figments published in that period by men who professed some regard to the name of Christ, have not been surpassed, either as to absurdity or wickedness, by any attempts of the same kind, in any age or country since. It is true the vigilance and authority of the apostles restrained these excesses from rising to that height to which they afterwards attained; but if the people who now object to the variety of names, sects, and sentiments, which have gradually prevailed amongst us within these thirty years past, had lived in the primitive church, they would have had at least equal cause for making the like objections. If, upon these accounts, they now think themselves at liberty to reject all parties alike, without examination, as empty pretenders to the truth, purity, and power of religion, there is little doubt but they would have done

the same then. The apostles were personally present with the first churches: their writings were appointed to be the rule of succeeding times, and, through the mercy of God are in our hands. Whoever is sincerely desirous to know the will of God, by attending to these lively oracles will be enabled to discern the path of truth and peace, through the midst of that maze of opinions wherein so many are bewildered and lost; but whoever is too wise or too indolent to search the scriptures humbly and diligently for himself, would have paid as little regard to the authority of the apostles, if he could have conversed with them: nay, the advantage is on our side; for, as the scriptures are held in professed veneration, we run no immediate risk of character or interest by consulting them; or they may be perused in retirement, unobserved by our nearest friends: whereas the apostles, though highly spoken of amongst us, were accounted while they lived the filth and off-scouring of all things; they were despised for their poverty and the meanness of their appearance, and detested as bigots and enthusiasts; so that it required some degree of faith and grace not to be ashamed of them.

Let not the reader be offended, if I close this book, as I did the former, with entreating him to reflect on the importance of having right views of the gospel of Christ and of the spirit of christianity. These are topics of universal concern. A believer in Jesus, however obscure, unnoticed, or oppressed in the present life, is happy: he is a child of God, the charge of angels, and heir of glory (Rom. viii. 14, 17); he has meat to eat that the world knows not of; and from the knowledge of his union and relation to his Redeemer (Phil. iv. 7.) he derives a peace which passes understanding, and a power suited to every service and circumstance of life: though weak in himself, he is strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus the Lord, (2 Cor. xii. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 1), upon whom he relies, as his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and expects from him, in due time, a complete redemption from every evil (1 Cor. i. 30): his faith is not merely speculative, like the cold assent which we give to a mathematical truth, nor is it the blind impulse of a warm imagination, but it is the effect of an apprehension of the wisdom, power, and love displayed in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; it is a constraining principle (Gal. v. 6; Acts xv. 9; 1 John v. 4; Heb. xi. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 18), that works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world; it gives the foretaste and evidence of things invisible to mortal eyes, and, transforming the soul into the resemblance of what it beholds, fills the heart with benevolence, gentleness, and patience, and directs every action to the sublimest ends, the glory of God and the good of mankind.

But whatever is styled religion, that is not thus pure, thus peaceable, thus operative, or at least that does not lead the soul to desire the graces of the Spirit, and to seek them in God's appointed way, by faith in his Son, is unworthy of the name. If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his (Rom. viii. 9); whatever else you may have, you have no interest in the promised blessings of the gospel; whatever else you can do, you cannot please God, Heb. xi. 6. If you do not count all things loss, and of no value (Phil. iii. 8), in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, you certainly do not understand the word gospel in St. Paul's sense; if you did, you would be of his mind: and are you not in danger of incurring that anathema which, under the influence of the Spirit of God, he denounces (1 Cor. xvi. 22) against all who love not the Lord Jesus? Search the scriptures, if you really think that in them you have eternal life, John v. 39. If, indeed, you could prove them to be cunningly-devised fables, you might neglect them without danger (2 Pet. i. 16); but, if the scriptures are true, there is a day coming when God shall judge the world, Acts xvii. 31. I need not appeal to scripture to convince you that, whatever your situation in life is, you must leave it, and experience a moment when the pleasures or honours of this world will afford you no comfort; but, if the scriptures are true, you must then appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; you must stand either at the right hand or the left, 2 Cor. v. 10. Important alternative! For to those on the left hand the King will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed," Matth. xxv. 41. If hitherto, while you have professed his name, you have had your heart filled with enmity against his doctrine and his people; if you have accounted his wisdom foolishness, and reproached the operations of his Spirit as enthusiasm and madness,—it is to be hoped you have done it through ignorance; you knew not what you did (1 Tim. i. 15; Luke xxiii. 34): there is, then, forgiveness with him; as yet he is upon a throne of grace. May the Spirit of God lead you to him before he takes his seat upon the throne of judgment! otherwise you are lost for ever. My heart's desire and prayer to God, for my readers, will be, that not one of them may fall under that awful sentence, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you Acts xiii. 41.

OLNEY HYMNS,

IN

THREE BOOKS.

——————— Cantabitis, Arcades, inquit,
Montibus hæc vestris, soli cantare periti
Arcades. O mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant,
Vestra meos olim si fistula dicat amores!

VIRGIL, Ecl. x. 31.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne;——and no man could learn that song, but the——redeemed from the earth. REV. xiv. 3.

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.——2 COR. vi. 10.

PREFACE.

Copies of a few of these Hymns have already appeared in periodical publications, and in some recent collections. I have observed one or two of them attributed to persons who certainly had no concern in them, but as transcribers. All that have been at different times parted with in manuscript are included in the present volume; and (if the information were of any great importance) the public may be assured, that the whole number were composed by two persons only. The original design would not admit of any other association. A desire of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere christians, though the principal, was not the only motive to this undertaking. It was likewise intended as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship. With this pleasing view, I entered upon my part, which would have been smaller than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, and in a very different form, if the wise, though mysterious providence of God, had not seen fit to cross my wishes. We had not proceeded far upon our proposed plan, before my dear friend was prevented, by a long and affecting indisposition, from affording me any farther assistance. My grief and disappointment were great; I hung my harp upon the willows, and for some time thought myself determined to proceed no farther without him. Yet my mind was afterwards led to resume the service. My progress in it, amidst a variety of other engagements, has been slow; yet, in a course of years, the Hymns amounted to a considerable number; and my deference to the judgment and desires of others, has at length overcome the reluctance I long felt to see them in print, while I had so few of my friend's Hymns to insert in the collection. Though it is possible a good judge of composition might be able to distinguish those which are his, I have thought it proper to preclude a misapplication, by subjoining the letter C* to each of them. For the rest I must be responsible.

There is a style and manner suited to the composition of Hymns, which may be more successfully, or at least more easily, attained by a versifier than by a poet. They should be Hymns, not Odes, if designed for public worship, and for the use of plain people. Perspicuity simplicity, and ease, should be chiefly attended to; and the imagery and colouring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged very sparingly, and with great judgment. The late Dr. Watts, many of whose Hymns are admirable patterns in this species of writing, might, as a poet, have a right to say, That it cost him some labour to restrain his fire, and to accommodate himself to the capacities of common readers. But it would not become me to make such a declaration. It behoved me to do my best. But though I would not offend readers of taste by a wilful coarseness and negligence, I do not write professedly for them. If the Lord, whom I serve, has been pleased to favour me with that mediocrity of talent, which may qualify me for usefulness to the weak and the poor of his flock, without quite disgusting persons of superior discernment, I have reason to be satisfied.

As the workings of the heart of man, and of the Spirit of God, are in general the same in all who are the subjects of grace, I hope most of these Hymns being the fruit and expression of my own experience, will coincide with the views of real christians of all denominations. But I cannot expect that every sentiment I have advanced will be universally approved. However, I am not conscious of having written a single line, with an intention either to flatter or

* Cowper.

to offend any party or person upon earth. I have simply declared my own views and feelings, as I might have done if I had composed Hymns in some of the newly-discovered islands in the South Sea, where no person had any knowledge of the name of Jesus but myself. I am a friend of peace; and being deeply convinced, that no one can profitably understand the great truths and doctrines of the gospel, any farther than he is taught of God, I have not a wish to obtrude my own tenets upon others, in a way of controversy: yet I do not think myself bound to conceal them. Many gracious persons (for many such I am persuaded there are), who differ from me, more or less, in those points which are called Calvinistic, appear desirous that the Calvinists should, for their sakes, studiously avoid every expression which they cannot approve. Yet few of them, I believe, impose a like restraint upon themselves, but think the importance of what they deem to be truth, justifies them in speaking their sentiments plainly and strongly. May I not plead for an equal liberty? The views I have received of the doctrines of grace are essential to my peace; I could not live comfortably a day or an hour without them. I likewise believe, yea, so far as my poor attainments warrant me to speak, I know them to be friendly to holiness, and to have a direct influence in producing and maintaining a gospel-conversation; and therefore I must not be ashamed of them.

The Hymns are distributed into three Books. In the first, I have classed those which are formed upon select passages of scripture, and placed them in the order of the books of the Old and New Testament. The second contains occasional Hymns, suited to particular seasons, or suggested by particular events or subjects. The third book is miscellaneous, comprising a variety of subjects relative to a life of faith in the Son of God, which have no express reference either to a single text of scripture, or to any determinate season or incident. These are farther subdivided into distinct heads. This arrangement is not so accurate, but that several of the Hymns might have been differently disposed. Some attention to method may be found convenient, though a logical exactness was hardly practicable. As some subjects in the several books are nearly coincident, I have, under the divisions in the third Book, pointed out those which are similar in the two former. And I have likewise here and there, in the first and second, made a reference to Hymns of a like import in the third.

This Publication, which, with my humble prayer to the Lord for his blessing upon it, I offer to the service and acceptance of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, of every name and in every place, into whose hands it may come, I more particularly dedicate to my dear friends in the parish and neighbourhood of Olney, for whose use the Hymns were originally composed; as a testimony of the sincere love I bear them, and as a token of my gratitude to the Lord, and to them, for the comfort and satisfaction with which the discharge of my ministry among them has been attended.

The hour is approaching, and, at my time of life, cannot be very distant, when my heart, my pen, and my tongue, will no longer be able to move in their service. But I trust, while my heart continues to beat, it will feel a warm desire for the prosperity of their souls; and while my hand can write, and my tongue speak, it will be the business and the pleasure of my life, to aim at promoting their growth and establishment in the grace of our God and Saviour. To this precious grace I commend them, and earnestly entreat them, and all who love his name, to strive mightily with their prayers to God for me, that I may be preserved faithful to the end, and enabled at last to finish my course with joy.

JOHN NEWTON

Olney, Bucks, Feb. 15th 1779

OLNEY HYMNS,

&c.

BOOK I.

ON SELECT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

GENESIS.

HYMN I

ADAM. CHAP. III.

1 On man, in his own image made,
How much did God bestow!
The whole creation homage paid,
And own'd him Lord below.

2 He dwelt in Eden's garden, stor'd
With sweets for every sense;
And there, with his descending Lord,
He walk'd in confidence.

3 But oh! by sin how quickly chang'd!
His honour forfeited,
His heart from God and truth estrang'd,
His conscience fill'd with dread!

4 Now from his Maker's voice he flees,
Which was before his joy,
And thinks to hide, amidst the trees,
From an all-seeing eye.

5 Compell'd to answer to his name,
With stubbornness and pride,
He cast on God himself the blame,
Nor once for mercy cried.

6 But grace, unask'd, his heart subdu'd,
And all his guilt forgave;
By faith the promis'd Seed he view'd,
And felt his power to save.

7 Thus we ourselves would justify,
Though we the law transgress,
Like him, unable to deny,
Unwilling to confess.

8 But when, by faith, the sinner sees
A pardon, bought with blood,
Then he forsakes his foolish pleas,
And gladly turns to God.

HYMN II.

CAIN AND ABEL. CHAP. IV. 3—8.

1 When Adam fell, he quickly lost
God's image, which he once possess'd:
See all our nature since could boast,
In Cain, his first-born son, express'd!

2 The sacrifice the Lord ordain'd,
In type of the Redeemer's blood,
Self-righteous reas'ning Cain disdain'd,
And thought his own first-fruits as good.

3 Yet rage and envy fill'd his mind,
When, with a sullen downcast look,
He saw his brother favour find,
Who God's appointed method took.

4 By Cain's own hand good Abel died,
Because the Lord approv'd his faith;
And when his blood for vengeance cried,
He vainly thought to hide his death.

5 Such was the wicked murd'rer Cain;
And such by nature still are we,
Until by grace we're born again,
Malicious, blind, and proud as he.

6 Like him, the way of grace we slight,
And in our own devices trust;
Call evil good, and darkness light,
And hate and persecute the just.

7 The saints in ev'ry age and place,
Have found his history fulfill'd;
The numbers all our thoughts surpass,
Of Abels whom the Cains have kill'd.*

8 Thus Jesus fell—but, oh! his blood
For better things than Abel's cries;†
Obtains his murd'rers peace with God,
And gains them mansions in the skies.

HYMN III.

WALKING WITH GOD. CHAP. V. 24.

1 Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

2 Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

3 What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their mem'ry still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

4 Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast:

5 The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

6 So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road,
That leads me to the Lamb.

C.

HYMN IV.

ANOTHER.

1 By faith in Christ I walk with God,
With heaven, my journey's end, in view;
Supported by his staff and rod,‡
My road is safe and pleasant too.

2 I travel through a desert wide,
Where many round me blindly stray;
But he vouchsafes to be my guide,§
And will not let me miss my way.

3 Though snares and dangers throng my path,
And earth and hell my course withstand,
I triumph over all by faith,*
Guarded by his almighty hand.

4 The wilderness affords no food,
But God for my support prepares;
Provides me every needful good,
And frees my soul from wants and cares.

5 With him sweet converse I maintain,
Great as he is, I dare be free;
Tell him all my grief and pain,
And he reveals his love to me.

6 Some cordial from his word he brings,
Whene'er my feeble spirit faints;
At once my soul revives and sings,
And yields no more to sad complaints.

7 I pity all that worldlings talk
Of pleasures that will quickly end:
Be this my choice, O Lord, to walk
With thee, my guide, my guard, my friend

HYMN V.

LOT IN SODOM. CHAP. XIII. 10.

1 How hurtful was the choice of Lot,
Who took up his abode
(Because it was a fruitful spot)
With them who fear'd not God!

2 A pris'ner he was quickly made,
Bereav'd of all his store;
And, but for Abram's timely aid,
He had return'd no more.

3 Yet still he seem'd resolv'd to stay,
As if it were his rest;
Although their sins from day to day†
His righteous soul distress'd.

4 A while he stayed, with anxious mind,
Expos'd to scorn and strife;
At last he left his all behind,
And fled to save his life.

5 In vain his sons-in-law he warn'd,
They thought he told but dreams;
His daughters, too, of them had learn'd,
And perish'd in the flames.

6 His wife escap'd a little way,
But died for looking back:
Does not her case to pilgrims say,
"Beware of growing slack!"

7 Yea, Lot himself could ling'ring stand,
Though vengeance was in view;
'Twas mercy pluck'd him by the hand,
Or he had perish'd too.

8 The doom of Sodom will be ours,
If to the earth we cleave:
Lord, quicken all our drowsy powers,
To flee to thee, and live.

* Rom. viii. 36. † Heb. xii. 24.
‡ Psal. xxiii. 4. § Psal. cvii.

* Psal. xxvii. 1, 2 † 2 Pet. ii. 8.

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5 [illegible]
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[illegible]

6 Wait for his [illegible] aid,
And though it [illegible] wait;
The promise may be long delayed,
But cannot [illegible] too late.

C.

HYMN VII.

ANOTHER.

1 Though troubles assail,
And dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail,
And foes all unite;
Yet one thing secures us,
Whatever betide,
The scripture assures us,
The Lord will provide.

2 The birds without barn
Or storehouse are fed;
From them let us learn
To trust for our bread:
His saints, what is fitting,
Shall ne'er be denied,
So long as 'tis written,
The Lord will provide.

3 We may, like the ships,
By tempests be tossed,
On perilous deeps,
But cannot be lost:
Though Satan enrages
The wind and the tide,
The promise engages,
The Lord will provide.

4 [illegible]
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6 [illegible]
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The Lord will provide.

7 No strength of our own,
Or goodness we claim;
Yet since we have known
The Saviour's great name,
In this our strong tower
For safety we hide,
The Lord is our power,
The Lord will provide.

8 When life sinks apace,
And death is in view,
This word of his grace
Shall comfort us through;
No fearing or doubting,
With Christ on our side,
We hope to die shouting,
The Lord will provide.

HYMN VIII.

ESAU. CHAP. XXV. 34. Heb. xii. 16.

1 Poor Esau repented too late,
That once he his birth-right despis'd,
And sold for a morsel of meat,
What could not too highly be priz'd:
How great was his anguish when told
The blessing he sought to obtain,
Was gone with the birth-right he sold,
And none could recall it again!

2 He stands as a warning to all,
Wherever the gospel shall come;
O hasten and yield to the call,
While yet for repentance there's room!
Your season will quickly be past;
Then hear and obey it to-day,
Lest, when you seek mercy at last,
The Saviour should frown you away

* 1 Sam. xxiii. 4.

3 What is it the world can propose?
A morsel of meat at the best!
For this are you willing to lose
A share in the joys of the blest?
Its pleasures will speedily end,
Its favour and praise are but breath;
And what can its profits befriend
Your soul in the moment of death?

4 If Jesus, for these, you despise,
And sin to the Saviour prefer;
In vain your entreaties and cries,
When summon'd to stand at his bar:
How will you his presence abide?
What anguish will torture your heart?
The saints all enthron'd by his side,
And you be compell'd to depart.

5 Too often, dear Saviour, have I
Preferr'd some poor trifle to thee;
How is it thou dost not deny
The blessing and birth-right to me?
No better than Esau I am,
Though pardon and heaven be mine;
To me belongs nothing but shame;
The praise and the glory be thine.

HYMN IX.

JACOB'S LADDER. CHAP. xxviii. 12.

1 If the Lord our leader be,
We may follow without fear;
East or west, by land or sea,
Home, with him, is ev'ry where.
When from Esau Jacob fled,
Though his pillow was of stone,
And the ground his humble bed,
Yet he was not left alone.

2 Kings are often waking kept,
Rack'd with cares on beds of state;
Never king like Jacob slept,
For he lay at heaven's gate;
Lo! he saw a ladder rear'd,
Reaching to the heavnely throne;
At the top the Lord appear'd,
Spake, and claim'd him for his own.

3 "Fear not, Jacob, thou art mine,
And my presence with thee goes:
On thy heart my love shall shine,
And my arm subdue thy foes:
From my promise comfort take,
For my help in trouble call;
Never will I thee forsake,
Till I have accomplish'd all."

4 Well does Jacob's ladder suit.
To the gospel-throne of grace:
We are at the ladder's foot.
Ev'ry hour, in ev'ry place
By assuming flesh and blood.
Jesus heaven and earth unites
We by faith ascend to God.*
God to dwell with us delights.

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

5 They who know the Saviour's name,
Are for all events prepar'd;
What can changes do to them,
Who have such a guide and guard?
Should they traverse earth around,
To the ladder still they come;
Ev'ry spot is holy ground,
God is there—and he's their home.

HYMN X.

MY NAME IS JACOB. CHAP. xxxii. 27.

1 Nay, I cannot let thee go,
Till a blessing thou bestow;
Do not turn away thy face,
Mine's an urgent pressing case.

2 Dost thou ask me who I am?
Ah, my Lord, thou know'st my name;
Yet the question gives a plea,
To support my suit with thee.

3 Thou didst once a wretch behold,
In rebellion blindly bold,
Scorn thy grace, thy power defy;
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.

4 Once a sinner near despair,
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord that mercy came to me.

5 Many years have pass'd since then,
Many changes I have seen,
Yet have been upheld till now;
Who could hold me up but thou?

6 Thou hast help'd in ev'ry need;
This emboldens me to plead:
After so much mercy past,
Canst thou let me sink at last?

7 No—I must maintain my hold,
'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
When I plead for Jesus' sake.

HYMN XI.

PLENTY IN THE TIME OF DEARTH. CHAP. xli. 56.

1 My soul once had its plenteous years,
And throve, with peace and comfort fill'd
Like the fat kine and ripen'd ears,
Which Pharaoh in his dream beheld.

2 With pleasing frames and grace receiv'd,
With means and ordinances fed,
How happy for a while I liv'd,
And little fear'd the want of bread.

3 But famine came, and left no sign
Of all the plenty I had seen;
Like the dry ears and half-starv'd kine,
I then look'd wither'd, faint, and lean

To Joseph the Egyptians went;
To Jesus I made known my case;
He, when my little stock was spent,
Open'd his magazine of grace.

5 For he the time of death foresaw,
And made provision long before:
That famish'd souls, like me, might draw
Supplies from his unbounded store.

6 Now on his bounty I depend,
And live from fear of dearth secure;
Maintain'd by such a mighty friend,
I cannot want till he is poor.

7 O sinners, hear his gracious call!
His mercy's door stands open wide;
He has enough to feed you all,
And none who come shall be denied.

HYMN XII.

JOSEPH MADE KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN. CHAP. xlv. 3. 4.

1 When Joseph his brethren beheld
Afflicted, and trembling with fear,
His heart with compassion was fill'd,
From weeping he could not forbear.
A while his behaviour was rough,
To bring their past sin to their mind;
But when they were humbled enough,
He hasted to shew himself kind.

2 How little they thought it was he,
Whom they had ill-treated and sold!
How great their confusion must be,
As soon as his name he had told!
"I'm Joseph your brother," he said,
"And still to my heart you are dear;
You sold me, and thought I was dead,
But God, for your sakes, sent me here."

3 Though greatly distressed before,
When charg'd with purloining the cup,
They now were confounded much more,
Not one of them durst to look up.
"Can Joseph, whom we would have slain,
Forgive us the evil we did?
And will he our households maintain?
O, this is a brother indeed!"

4 Thus dragg'd by my conscience, I came,
And laden with guilt, to the Lord,
Surrounded with terror and shame,
Unable to utter a word.
At first he look'd stern and severe,
What anguish then pierced my heart!
Expecting each moment to hear
The sentence "Thou cursed, depart!"

5 But, oh! what surprise when he spoke,
While tenderness beam'd in his face;
My heart then to pieces was broke,
O'erwhelmed and confounded by grace:
"Poor sinner, I know thee full well,
By thee I was sold and was slain;
But I died to redeem thee from hell,
And raise thee in glory to reign.

6 I'm Jesus, whom thou hast blasphem'd,
And crucified often afresh;
But let me henceforth be esteem'd
Thy brother, thy bone, and thy flesh:
My pardon I freely bestow,
Thy wants I will fully supply;
I'll guide thee and guard thee below,
And soon will remove thee on high.

7 Go, publish to sinners around,
That they may be willing to come,
The mercy which now you have found,
And tell them that yet there is room"
O sinners! the message obey,
No more vain excuses pretend;
But come without further delay,
To Jesus our brother and friend.

EXODUS.

HYMN XIII.

THE BITTER WATERS. CHAP. xv. 23. 25

1 Bitter, indeed, the waters are,
Which in this desert flow;
Though to the eye they promise fair,
They taste of sin and woe.

2 Of pleasing draughts I once could dream,
But now, awake, I find
That sin has poison'd ev'ry stream
And left a curse behind.

3 But there's a wonder-working wood,
I've heard believers say,
Can make these bitter waters good,
And take the curse away.

4 The virtues of this healing tree
Are known and priz'd by few;
Reveal this secret, Lord, to me,
That I may prize it too.

5 The cross on which the Saviour died,
And conquer'd for his saints;
This is the tree, by faith applied,
Which sweetens all complaints.

6 Thousands have found the bless'd effect,
No longer mourn their lot:
While on his sorrows they reflect,
Their own are all forgot.

7 When they, by faith, behold the cross,
Though many griefs they meet;
They draw again from ev'ry loss,
And find the bitter sweet.

HYMN XIV.

JEHOVAH-ROPHI; OR, THE LORD MY HEALER. CHAP. xv. 26.

1 Heal us, Emmanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel thy touch;
Deep wounded souls to thee repair,
And, Saviour, we are such.

2 Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust thy word;
But wilt thou pity us the less?
Be that far from thee, Lord!

3 Remember him who once applied
With trembling for relief;
"Lord, I believe," with tears he cried, *
"O help my unbelief!"

4 She too, who touch'd thee in the press,
And healing virtue stole,
Was answered, "Daughter, go in peace,
Thy faith hath made thee whole." †

5 Conceal'd amid the gath'ring throng,
She would have shunn'd thy view;
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.

6 Like her, with hopes and fears, we come,
To touch thee if we may;
Oh! send us not despairing home,
Send none unheal'd away!

C.

HYMN XV.

MANNA. CHAP. xvi. 18.

1 MANNA to Israel well supplied
The want of other bread;
While God is able to provide,
His people shall be fed.

2 Thus, though the corn and wine should fail,
And creature-streams be dry,
The prayer of faith will still prevail,
For blessings from on high.

3 Of his kind care how sweet a proof!
It suited ev'ry taste;
Who gather'd most, had just enough,
Enough who gather'd least.

4 'Tis thus our gracious Lord divides
Our comforts and our cares;
His own unerring hand provides,
And gives us each our shares.

5 He knows how much the weak can bear,
And helps them when they cry;
The strongest have no strength to spare,
For such he'll strongly try.

6 Daily they saw the manna come,
And cover all the ground;
But what they tried to keep at home,
Corrupted soon was found.

7 Vain their attempt to store it up,
This was to tempt the Lord;
Israel must live by faith and hope,
And not upon a hoard.

* Mark ix. 24 † Mark v. 34.

HYMN XVI.

MANNA HOARDED. CHAP. xvi. 20.

1 THE manna, favour'd Israel's meat,
Was gather'd day by day;
When all the host was serv'd, the heat
Melted the rest away.

2 In vain to hoard it up they tried,
Against to-morrow came;
It then bred worms and putrified,
And prov'd their sin and shame.

3 'Twas daily bread, and would not keep,
But must be still renew'd;
Faith should not want a hoard or heap,
But trust the Lord for food.

4 The truths by which the soul is fed,
Must thus be had afresh;
For notions resting in the head
Will only feed the flesh.

5 However true, they have no life
Or unction to impart;
They breed the worms of pride and strife
But cannot cheer the heart.

6 Nor can the best experience past
The life of faith maintain;
The brighest hope will faint at last,
Unless supplied again.

7 Dear Lord, while we in prayer are found,
Do thou the manna give;
Oh! let it fall on all around,
That we may eat and live!

HYMN XVII.

JEHOVAH-NISSI; OR, THE LORD MY BANNER. CHAP. xvii. 15.

1 BY whom was David taught
To aim the dreadful blow,
When he Goliah fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
No sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

2 'Twas Israel's God and King
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours.

3 Who order'd Gideon forth
To storm the invaders camp,*
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

* Judges vii. 20.

4 Oh! I have seen the day,
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
My trust is in the Lord,
My soul has quell'd a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.

5 But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side?
Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's friend,
Will help his servant to the end.

C.

HYMN XVIII.

THE GOLDEN CALF. CHAP. xxxii. 4, 31.

1 When Israel heard the fiery law
From Sinai's top proclaim'd,
Their hearts seem'd full of holy awe,
Their stubborn spirits tam'd.

2 Yet, as forgetting all they knew,
Ere forty days were past,
With blazing Sinai still in view,
A molten calf they cast.

3 Yea, Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Who on the mount had been,
He durst prepare the idol beast,
And lead them on to sin.

4 Lord, what is man, and what are we,
To recompense thee thus!
In their offence our own we see,
Their story points at us.

5 From Sinai's top we heard thee speak,
And from mount Calv'ry too;
And yet to idols oft we seek,
While thou art in our view.

6 Some golden calf, or golden dream,
Some fancied creature good,
Presumes to share the heart with him,
Who bought the whole with blood.

7 Lord, save us from our golden calves,
Our sin with grief we own;
We would no more be thine by halves,
But live to thee alone.

LEVITICUS.

HYMN XIX.

THE TRUE AARON. CHAP. viii. 7—9.

1 See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the vail appear,
In robes of mystic meaning drest,
Presenting Israel's prayer.

2 The plate of gold which crowns his brows
His holiness describes;
His breast displays, in shining rows,
The names of all the tribes.

3 With the atoning blood he stands
Before the mercy-seat;
And clouds of incense from his hands
Arise with odour sweet.

4 Urim and Thummim near his heart
In rich engravings worn,
The sacred light of truth impart,
To teach and to adorn.

5 Through him the eye of faith descries
A greater Priest than he:
Thus Jesus pleads above the skies,
For you, my friends, and me.

6 He bears the names of all his saints
Deep on his heart engrav'd;
Attentive to the state and wants
Of all his love has sav'd.

7 In him a holiness complete,
Light and perfections shine,
And wisdom, grace, and glory meet;
A Saviour all divine!

8 The blood, which as a priest he bears
For sinners, is his own;
The incense of his prayers and tears
Perfume the holy throne.

9 In him my weary soul has rest,
Though I am weak and vile,
I read my name upon his breast,
And see the Father smile.

NUMBERS.

HYMN XX.

BALAAM'S WISH. CHAP. xxiii. 10.

1 How bless'd the righteous are,
When they resign their breath;
No wonder Balaam wish'd to share
In such a happy death.

2 "Oh! let me die," said he,
"The death the righteous do;
When life is ended, let me be
Found with the faithful few."

3 The force of truth, how great!
When enemies confess,
None but the righteous, whom they hate,
A solid hope possess.

4 But Balaam's wish was vain,
His heart was insincere;
He thirsted for unrighteous gain,
And sought a portion here.

5 He seem'd the Lord to know,
And to offend him loth;
But Mammon prov'd his overthrow;
For none can serve them both.

6 May you, my friends, and I,
Warning from hence receive;
If like the righteous we would die,
To choose the life they live.

JOSHUA.

HYMN XXI.

GIBEON. CHAP. X. 6.

1 When Joshua, by God's command,
Invaded Canaan's guilty land,
Gibeon, unlike the nations round,
Submission made, and mercy found.

2 Their stubborn neighbours, who, enrag'd,
United war against them wag'd,
By Joshua soon were overthrown,
For Gibeon's cause was now his own.

3 He from whose arm they ruin fear'd,
Their leader and ally appear'd;
An emblem of the Saviour's grace,
To those who humbly seek his face.

4 The men of Gibeon wore disguise,
And gain'd their peace by framing lies;
For Joshua had no power to spare,
If he had known from whence they were.

5 But Jesus invitation sends,
Treating with rebels as his friends;
And holds the promise forth in view,
To all who for his mercy sue.

6 Too long his goodness I disdain'd,
Yet went at last, and peace obtain'd;
But soon the noise of war I heard,
And former friends in arms appear'd.

7 Weak in myself, for help I cried;
Lord, I am press'd on every side;
The cause is thine, they fight with me,
But every blow is aim'd at thee.

8 With speed to my relief he came,
And put my enemies to shame:
Thus sav'd by grace, I live to sing
The love and triumphs of my King.

JUDGES.

HYMN XXII.

JEHOVAH-SHALOM; OR, THE LORD IS PEACE. CHAP. vi. 24.

1 Jesus, whose blood so freely stream'd,
To satisfy the law's demand,
By thee from guilt and wrath redeem'd,
Before the Father's face I stand.

2 To reconcile offending man,
Make Justice drop her angry rod;
What creature could have form'd the plan,
Or who fulfil it, but a God?

3 No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserv'd the whole;
No arrows dipt in wrath to pierce
The guilty, but returning soul.

4 Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hop'd to see?
Peace, by his injur'd Sovereign wrought,
His Sovereign fastened to the tree.

5 Now, Lord, thy feeble worm prepare!
For strife with earth and hell begins;
Confirm and gird me for the war,
They hate the soul that hates his sins.

6 Let them in horrid league agree!
They may assault, they may distress;
But cannot quench thy love to me,
Nor rob me of the Lord, my peace.

C.

HYMN XXIII.

GIDEON'S FLEECE. CHAP. vi. 37—40.

1 The signs which God to Gideon gave,
His holy sovereignty made known,
That he alone has power to save,
And claims the glory as his own.

2 The dew which first the fleece had fill'd,
When all the earth was dry around,
Was from it afterwards with-held,
And only fell upon the ground.

3 To Israel thus the heavenly dew
Of saving truth was long restrain'd;
Of which the Gentiles nothing knew,
But dry and desolate remain'd.

4 But now the Gentiles have receiv'd
The balmy dew of gospel-peace;
And Israel, who his Spirit griev'd,
Is left a dry and empty fleece.

5 This dew still falls at his command,
To keep his chosen plants alive;
They shall, though in a thirsty land,
"Like willows by the waters thrive."*

* Isa. xliv. 4.

6 But chiefly when his people meet,
To hear his word and seek his face,
The gentle dew, with influence sweet,
Descends, and nourishes their grace.

7 But, ah! what numbers still are dead,
Though under means of grace they lie!
The dew still falling round their head,
And yet their heart untouch'd and dry.

8 Dear Saviour! hear us when we call,
To wrestling prayer an answer give;
Pour down thy dew upon us all,
That all may feel, and all may live.

HYMN XXIV.

SAMSON'S LION. CHAP. xiv. 8.

1 THE lion that on Samson roar'd,
And thirsted for his blood,
With honey afterwards was stor'd,
And furnish'd him with food.

2 Believers, as they pass along,
With many lions meet,
But gather sweetness from the strong,
And from the eater meat.

3 The lions rage and roar in vain,
For Jesus is their shield;
Their losses prove a certain gain,
Their troubles comfort yield.

4 The world and Satan join their strength,
To fill their souls with fears;
But crops of joy they reap at length,
From what they sow in tears.

5 Afflictions make them love the word,
Stir up their hearts to prayer,
And many precious fruits afford
Of their Redeemer's care.

6 The lions roar, but cannot kill;
Then fear them not, my friends,
They bring us, though against their will,
The honey Jesus sends.

I SAMUEL.

HYMN XXV.

HANNAH; OR, THE THRONE OF GRACE. CHAP. i. 18.

1 WHEN Hannah, press'd with grief,
Pour'd forth her soul in prayer,
She quickly found relief,
And left her burden there:
Like her, in ev'ry trying case,
Let us approach the throne of grace.

2 When she began to pray,
Her heart was pain'd and sad;
But ere she went away,
Was comforted and glad:
In trouble what a resting-place
Have they who know the throne of grace;

3 Though men and devils rage,
And threaten to devour,
The saints, from age to age,
Are safe from all their power;
Fresh strength they gain to run their race,
By waiting at the throne of grace.

4 Eli her case mistook;
How was her spirit mov'd
By his unkind rebuke!
But God her cause approv'd.
We need not fear a creature's face,
While welcome at a throne of grace.

5 She was not fill'd with wine,
As Eli rashly thought;
But with a faith divine,
And found the help she sought:
Though men despise and call us base,
Still let us ply the throne of grace.

6 Men have not power or skill
With troubled souls to bear;
Though they express good-will,
Poor comforters they are:
But swelling sorrows sink apace,
When we approach the throne of grace.

7 Numbers before have tried,
And found the promise true;
Nor yet one been denied,
Then why should I or you?
Let us by faith their footsteps trace,
And hasten to the throne of grace.

8 As fogs obscure the light,
And taint the morning air,
But soon are put to flight,
If the bright sun appear:
Thus Jesus will our troubles chase,
By shining from the throne of grace.

HYMN XXVI.

DAGON BEFORE THE ARK. CHAP. v. 4, 5.

1 WHEN first to make my heart his own,
The Lord reveal'd his mighty grace;
Self reigned like Dagon on the throne,
But could not long maintain its place.

2 It fell, and own'd the power divine,
(Grace can with ease the victory gain)
But soon this wretched heart of mine
Contriv'd to set it up again.

3 Again the Lord his name proclaimed,
And brought the hateful idol low;
Then self, like Dagon, broken, maimed,
Seemed to receive a mortal blow.

4 Yet self is not of life bereft.
Nor ceases to oppose his will;
Though but a maimed stump be left
'Tis Dagon, 'tis an idol still.

5 Lord, must I always guilty prove,
And idols in my heart have room?*
Oh! let the fire of heavenly love
The very stump of self consume!

HYMN XXVII.

THE MILCH-KINE DRAWING THE ARK:—FAITH'S SURRENDER OF ALL. CHAP. vi. 1—.

1 The kine unguided went
By the directest road,
When the Philistines homeward sent
The ark of Israel's God.

2 Lowing they passed along
And left their calves shut up;
They felt an instinct for their young,
But would not turn or stop.

3 Shall brutes, devoid of thought,
Their Maker's will obey;
And we who by his grace are taught,
More stubborn prove than they?

4 He shed his precious blood,
To make us his alone;
If wash'd in that atoning flood,
We are no more our own.

5 If he his will reveal,
Let us obey his call;
And think, whate'er the flesh may feel,
His love deserves our all.

6 We should maintain in view
His glory, as our end;
Too much we cannot bear or do,
For such a matchless friend.

7 His saints should stand prepared
In duty's path to run;
Nor count their greatest trials hard,
So that his will be done.

8 With Jesus for our guide,
The path is safe, though rough;
The promise says, "I will provide,"
And faith replies, "Enough."

HYMN XXVIII.

SAUL'S ARMOUR. CHAP. xvii. 38—40.

1 When first my soul enlisted
My Saviour's foes to fight,
Mistaken friends insisted
I was not arm'd aright.

So Saul advised David,
He certainly would fail,
Nor could his life be saved,
Without a coat of mail.

2 But David, though he yielded
To put the armour on,
Soon found he could not wield it,
And ventur'd forth with none.
With only sling and pebble,
He fought the fight of faith;
The weapons seem'd but feeble,
Yet prov'd Goliah's death.

3 Had I by him been guided,
And quickly thrown away
The armour men provided,
I might have gain'd the day;
But arm'd as they advis'd me,
My expectations fail'd;
My enemy surpris'd me,
And had almost prevail'd.

4 Furnish'd with books and notions,
And arguments and pride,
I practis'd all my motions,
And Satan's pow'r defied;
But soon perceiv'd with trouble,
That these would do no good;
Iron to him is stubble,*
And brass like rotten wood.

5 I triumph'd at a distance,
While he was out of sight;
But faint was my resistance,
When forc'd to join in fight:
He broke my sword in shivers,
And pierc'd my boasted shield;
Laugh'd at my vain endeavours,
And drove me from the field.

6 Satan will not be braved
By such a worm as I;
Then let me learn, with David,
To trust in the Most High;
To plead the name of Jesus,
And use the sling of prayer;
Thus arm'd, when Satan sees us,
He'll tremble and despair.

II. SAMUEL.

HYMN XXIX.

DAVID'S FALL. CHAP. xi. 27.

1 How David, when by sin deceiv'd,
From bad to worse went on!
For when the Holy Spirit's griev'd,
Our strength and guard are gone.

2 His eye on Bathsheba once fix'd,
With poison fill'd his soul;
He ventur'd on adult'ry next,
And murder crown'd the whole.

* Hosea xiv. 8.

* Job. xli. 27.

3 So from a spark of fire at first,
That has not been descried,
A dreadful flame has often burst,
And ravag'd far and wide.

4 When sin deceives, it hardens too,
For though he vainly sought
To hide his crimes from public view,
Of God he little thought.

5 He neither would nor could repent,
No true compunction felt;
Till God in mercy Nathan sent,
His stubborn heart to melt.

6 The parable held forth a fact,
Design'd his case to show;
But though the picture was exact
Himself he did not know.

7 "Thou art the man," the prophet said,
That word his slumber broke;
And when he own'd his sin, and prayed,
The Lord forgiveness spoke.

8 Let those who think they stand beware
For David stood before;
Nor let the fallen soul despair,
For mercy can restore.

HYMN XXX.

IS THIS THY KINDNESS TO THY FRIEND? CHAP. xvi. 17.

1 POOR, weak, and worthless, though I am,
I have a rich almighty Friend;
Jesus, the Saviour, is his name;
He freely loves, and without end.

2 He ransom'd me from hell with blood,
And by his power my foes control'd;
He found me, wand'ring far from God,
And brought me to his chosen fold.

3 He cheers my heart, my want supplies,
And says that I shall shortly be
Enthron'd with him above the skies,
Oh! what a friend is Christ to me

4 But, ah! my inmost spirit mourns,
And well my eyes with tears may swim,
To think of my perverse returns;
I've been a faithless friend to him.

5 Often my gracious Friend I grieve,
Neglect, distrust, and disobey,
And often Satan's lies believe,
Sooner than all my Friend can say.

6 He bids me always freely come,
And promises whate'er I ask;
But I am straiten'd, cold, and dumb,
And count my privilege a task.

7 Before the world, that hates his cause,
My treach'rous heart has throbb'd with shame;
Loth to forego the world's applause,
I hardly dare avow his name

8 Sure, were not I most vile and base,
I could not thus my Friend requite!
And were not he the God of grace,
He'd frown, and spurn me from his sight.

I. KINGS.

HYMN XXXI.

ASK WHAT I SHALL GIVE THEE. CHAP. iii. 5

1 COME, my soul, thy suit prepare,
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay.

2 Thou art coming to a King,*
Large petitions with thee bring;
For his grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

3 With my burden I begin,
Lord, remove this load of sin!
Let thy blood, for sinners spilt,
Set my conscience free from guilt.

4 Lord, I come to thee for rest,
Take possession of my breast;
There thy blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign.

5 As the image in the glass
Answers the beholder's face;
Thus unto my heart appear,
Print thine own resemblance there.

6 While I am a pilgrim here,
Let thy love my spirit cheer;
As my Guide, my Guard, my Friend,
Lead me to my journey's end.

7 Shew me what I have to do,
Ev'ry hour my strength renew;
Let me live a life of faith,
Let me die thy people's death.

HYMN XXXII.

ANOTHER.

1 IF Solomon for wisdom prayed,
The Lord before had made him wise,
Else he another choice had made,
And ask'd for what the worldlings prize.

2 Thus he invites his people still;
He first instructs them how to choose,
Then bids them ask whate'er they will,
Assur'd that he will not refuse.

3 Our wishes would our ruin prove,
Could we our wretched choice obtain,
Before we feel the Saviour's love
Kindle our love to him again.

* Psal. lxxxi. 10.

4 But when our hearts perceive his worth,
Desires, till then unknown, take place;
Our spirits cleave no more to earth,
But pant for holiness and grace.

5 And dost thou say, "Ask what thou wilt?"
Lord, I would seize the golden hour;
I pray to be releas'd from guilt,
And freed from sin and Satan's power.

6 More of thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of thine image let me bear;
Erect thy throne within my heart,
And reign without a rival there.

7 Give me to read my pardon seal'd,
And from thy joy to draw my strength;
To have thy boundless love reveal'd,
In all its height, and breadth, and length.

8 Grant these requests, I ask no more,
But to thy care the rest resign;
Sick, or in health, or rich, or poor,
All shall be well if thou art mine.

HYMN XXXIII.

ANOTHER.

1 BEHOLD the throne of grace!
The promise calls me near;
There Jesus shews a smiling face,
And waits to answer prayer.

2 That rich atoning blood,
Which sprinkled round I see,
Provides for those who come to God,
An all-prevailing plea.

3 My soul, ask what thou wilt,
Thou canst not be too bold;
Since his own blood for thee he spilt,
What else can he with-hold?

4 Beyond thy utmost wants,
His love and power can bless:
To praying souls he always grants
More than they can express.

5 Since 'tis the Lord's command,
My mouth I open wide;
Lord, open thou thy bounteous hand,
That I may be supplied.

6 Thine image, Lord, bestow,
Thy presence and thy love;
I ask to serve thee here below,
And reign with thee above.

7 Teach me to live by faith,
Conform my will to thine;
Let me victorious be in death,
And then in glory shine.

8 If thou these blessings give,
And wilt my portion be,
Cheerful the world's poor toys I leave
To them who know not thee.

HYMN XXXIV.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA. CHAP. x. 1.—9.

1 FROM Sheba a distant report,
Of Solomon's glory and fame,
Invited the queen to his court,
But all was outdone when she came;
She cried, with a pleasing surprise,
When first she before him appear'd,
"How much what I see with my eyes,
Surpasses the rumour I heard!"

2 When once to Jerusalem come,
The treasure and train she had brought,
The wealth she possessed at home,
No longer had place in her thought;
His house, his attendants, his throne,
All struck her with wonder and awe:
The glory of Solomon shone
In every object she saw.

3 But Solomon most she admir'd,
Whose spirit conducted the whole;
His wisdom, which God had inspir'd,
His bounty and greatness of soul;
Of all the hard questions she put,
A ready solution he shewed;
Exceeded her wish and her suit,
And more than she ask'd him bestowed.

4 Thus I, when the gospel proclaim'd
The Saviour's great name in my ears,
The wisdom for which he is fam'd,
The love which to sinners he bears;
I long'd, and I was not denied,
That I in his presence might bow;
I saw, and transported I cried,
"A greater than Solomon thou!"

5 My conscience no comfort could find,
By doubts and hard questions opposed;
But he restor'd peace to my mind,
And answer'd each doubt I proposed,
Beholding me poor and distress'd,
His bounty supplied all my wants:
My prayer could have never express'd
So much as this Solomon grants.

6 I heard, and was slow to believe,
But now with my eyes I behold,
Much more than my heart could conceive,
Or language could ever have told
How happy thy servants must be,
Who always before thee appear!
Vouchsafe, Lord, this blessing to me,
I find it is good to be here.

HYMN XXXV.

ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS. * CHAP. xvii. 6.

1 ELIJAH'S example declares,
Whatever distress may betide,
The saints may commit all their cares
To him who will surely provide:

* Book III. Hymn xlvii.

When rain long with-held from the earth,
Occasioned a famine of bread,
The prophet, secur'd from the dearth,
By ravens was constantly fed.

2 More likely to rob than to feed,
Were ravens who live upon prey:
But when the Lord's people have need,
His goodness will find out a way.
This instance to those may seem strange,
Who know not how faith can prevail;
But sooner all nature shall change,
Than one of God's promises fail.

3 Nor is it a singular case,
The wonder is often renew'd;
And many can say to his praise,
He sends them by ravens their food:
Thus worldlings, though ravens indeed,
Though greedy and selfish their mind,
If God has a servant to feed,
Against their own wills can be kind.

4 Thus Satan, that raven unclean,
Who croaks in the ears of the saints,
Compell'd by a power unseen,
Administers oft to their wants;
God teaches them how to find food,
From all the temptations they feel:
This raven who thirsts for my blood,
Has help'd me to many a meal.

5 How safe and how happy are they,
Who on the good shepherd rely!
He gives them out strength for their day,
Their wants he will surely supply;
He ravens and lions can tame,
All creatures obey his command:
Then let me rejoice in his name,
And leave all my cares in his hand.

HYMN XXXVI.

THE MEAL AND CRUISE OF OIL. CHAP. xvii. 16.

1 By the poor widow's oil and meal
Elijah was sustain'd;
Though small the stock, it lasted well,
For God the store maintain'd.

2 It seem'd as if from day to day,
They were to eat and die;
But still, though in a secret way,
He sent a fresh supply.

3 Thus to his poor he still will give
Just for the present hour:
But for to-morrow they must live
Upon his word and power.

4 No barn or store-house they possess,
On which they can depend;
Yet have no cause to fear distress,
For Jesus is their friend.

5 Then let no doubt your mind assail:
Remember God has said,
"The cruise and barrel shall not fail,
My people shall be fed."

6 And thus, though faint, it often seems,
He keeps their grace alive;
Supplied by his refreshing streams,
Their dying hopes revive.

7 Though in ourselves we have no stock,
The Lord is nigh to save:
His door flies open when we knock,
And 'tis but ask and have.

II KINGS.

HYMN XXXVII.

JERICHO; OR, THE WATERS HEALED. CHAP ii. 19—22.

1 THOUGH Jericho pleasantly stood,
And look'd like a promising soil;
The harvest produc'd little food,
To answer the husbandman's toil.
The water some property had,
Which poisonous proved to the ground;
The springs were corrupted and bad,
The streams spread a barrenness round

2 But soon by the cruise and the salt,
Prepar'd by Elisha's command,
The water was cured of its fault,
And plenty enriched the land:
An emblem sure this of the grace,
On fruitless dead sinners bestow'd;
For man is in Jericho's case,
Till cured by the mercy of God.

3 How noble a creature he seems!
What knowledge, invention, and skill!
How large and extensive his schemes!
How much can he do if he will!
His zeal to be learned and wise
Will yield to no limits or bars;
He measures the earth and the skies,
And numbers and marshals the stars.

4 Yet still he is barren of good;
In vain are his talents and art;
For sin has infected his blood,
And poison'd the springs of his heart:
Though cockatrice eggs he can hatch *
Or, spider-like, cobwebs can weave;
'Tis madness to labour and watch
For what will destroy or deceive.

5 But grace, like the salt in the cruise,
When cast in the spring of the soul,
A wonderful change will produce,
Diffusing new life through the whole;
The wilderness blooms like a rose,
The heart which was vile and abhorr'd,
Now fruitful and beautiful grows,
The garden and joy of the Lord.

* Isa. lix. 5.

HYMN XXXVIII.

NAAMAN. CHAP. v. 14.

1 BEFORE Elisha's gate
The Syrian leper stood;
But could not brook to wait,
He deem'd himself too good:
He thought the prophet would attend,
And not to him a message send.

2 Have I this journey come,
And will he not be seen?
I were as well at home,
Would washing make me clean;
Why must I wash in Jordan's flood?
Damascus' rivers are as good.

3 Thus, by his foolish pride,
He almost missed a cure;
Howe'er at length he tried,
And found the method sure:
Soon as his pride was brought to yield,
The leprosy was quickly heal'd.

4 Leprous and proud as he,
To Jesus thus I came,
From sin to set me free,
When first I heard his fame;
Surely, thought I, my pompous train
Of vows and tears will notice gain.

5 My heart devis'd the way
Which I suppos'd he'd take,
And when I found delay,
Was ready to go back;
Had he some painful task enjoined,
I to performance seem'd inclined.

6 When by his word he spake,
"That fountain opened see;
'Twas opened for thy sake,
Go wash, and thou art free;"
Oh! how did my proud heart gainsay;
I fear'd to trust this simple way.

7 At length I trial made,
When I had much endur'd;
The message I obeyed,
I wash'd, and I was cured:
Sinners, this healing fountain try,
Which cleans'd a wretch so vile as I.

HYMN XXXIX.

THE BORROWED AXE. CHAP. vi. 5, 6.

1 THE prophets sons, in times of old,
Though to appearance poor,
Were rich, without possessing gold,
And honoured, though obscure.

2 In peace their daily bread they ate,
By honest labour earned;
While daily at Elisha's feet,
They grace and wisdom learned.

3 The prophet's presence cheer'd their toil,
They watch'd the words he spoke:
Whether they turn'd the furrowed soil,
Or fell'd the spreading oak.

4 Once as they listened to his theme,
Their conference was stopped;
For one beneath the yielding stream,
A borrowed axe had dropped.

5 "Alas! it was not mine (he said),
How shall I make it good?"
Elisha heard, and when he prayed,
The iron swam like wood.

6 If God, in such a small affair,
A miracle perform;
It shews his condescending care
Of poor unworthy worms.

7 Though kings and nations, in his view,
Are but as motes and dust;
His eye and ear are fixed on you,
Who in his mercy trust.

8 Not one concern of ours is small,
If we belong to him;
To teach us this, the Lord of all
Once made the iron swim.

HYMN XL.

MORE WITH US THAN WITH THEM. CHAP. vi. 16

1 ALAS! Elisha's servant cried,
When he the Syrian army spied;
But he was soon released from care,
In answer to the prophet's prayer.

2 Straightway he saw, with other eyes,
A greater army from the skies,
A fiery guard around the hill:—
Thus are the saints preserved still.

3 When Satan and his host appear,
Like him of old, I faint and fear;
Like him, by faith, with joy I see,
A greater host engaged for me.

4 The saints espouse my cause by prayer,
The angels make my soul their care;
Mine is the promise sealed with blood,
And Jesus lives to make it good.

I CHRONICLES.

HYMN XLI.

FAITH'S REVIEW AND EXPECTATION. CHAP. xvii. 16, 17.

1 AMAZING grace! (how sweet the sound
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ'd.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promis'd good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

5 Yea, when this heart and flesh shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the vail,
A life of joy and peace.

6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call'd me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

NEHEMIAH.

HYMN XLII.

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.
CHAP. viii. 10.

1 JOY is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

2 But where the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known;
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone.

3 A bleeding Saviour, seen by faith,
A sense of pard'ning love,
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.

4 To take a glimpse within the vail,
To know that God is mine,
Are springs of joy that never fail,
Unspeakable! divine!

5 These are the joys which satisfy,
And sanctify the mind;
Which make the spirit mount on high,
And leave the world behind.

6 No more, believers, mourn your lot,
But if you are the Lord's,
Resign to them that know him not
Such joys as earth affords.

JOB.

HYMN XLIII.

OH THAT I WERE AS IN MONTHS PAST.
CHAP. xxix. 2.

1 SWEET was the time when first I felt
The Saviour's pard'ning blood
Applied to cleanse my soul from guilt,
And bring me home to God.

2 Soon as the morn the light reveal'd,
His praises tuned my tongue;
And when the ev'ning shades prevail'd,
His love was all my song.

3 In vain the tempter spread his wiles,
The world no more could charm;
I lived upon my Saviour's smiles,
And lean'd upon his arm.

4 In prayer my soul drew near the Lord,
And saw his glory shine;
And when I read his holy word,
I call'd each promise mine.

5 Then to his saints I often spoke
Of what his love had done;
But now my heart is almost broke,
For all my joys are gone.

6 Now, when the ev'ning shade prevails,
My soul in darkness mourns;
And when the morn the light reveals,
No light to me returns.

7 My prayers are now a chatt'ring noise,
For Jesus hides his face;
I read,—the promise meets my eyes,
But will not reach my case.

8 Now Satan threatens to prevail,
And make my soul his prey;
Yet, Lord, thy mercies cannot fail,
O come without delay!

HYMN XLIV.

THE CHANGE.* ibid.

1 SAVIOUR, shine, and cheer my soul,
Bid my dying hopes revive;
Make my wounded spirit whole,
Far away the tempter drive:
Speak the word, and set me free,
Let me live alone to thee.

2 Shall I sigh and pray in vain,
Wilt thou still refuse to hear;
Wilt thou not return again,
Must I yield to black despair?
Thou hast taught my heart to pray,
Canst thou turn thy face away?

* Book II. Hymn xxxiv. and Book III. Hymn xxxvi

3 Once I thought my mountain strong,
Firmly fix'd, no more to move;
Then thy grace was all my song,
Then my soul was fill'd with love:
Those were happy golden days,
Sweetly spent in prayer and praise.

4 When my friends have said, "Beware,
Soon or late you'll find a change,'
I could see no cause for fear,
Vain their caution seem'd, and strange:
Not a cloud obscur'd my sky,
Could I think a tempest nigh?

5 Little, then, myself I knew,
Little thought of Satan's power;
Now I find their words were true,
Now I feel the stormy hour!
Sin has put my joys to flight,
Sin has chang'd my day to night.

6 Satan asks, and mocks my woe,
"Boaster, where is now your God;
Silence, Lord, this cruel foe,
Let him know I'm bought with blood:
Tell him, since I know thy name,
Though I change, thou art the same.

PSALMS.

HYMN XLV.

PLEADING FOR MERCY. PSALM vi.

1 In mercy, not in wrath, rebuke
Thy feeble worm, my God!
My spirit dreads thine angry look,
And trembles at thy rod.

2 Have mercy, Lord, for I am weak,
Regard my heavy groans;
O, let thy voice of comfort speak,
And heal my broken bones.

3 By day, my busy beating head
Is fill'd with anxious fears;
By night upon my restless bed,
I weep a flood of tears.

4 Thus I sit desolate and mourn,
Mine eyes grow dull with grief;
How long, my Lord, ere thou return,
And bring my soul relief?

5 O, come and shew thy power to save,
And spare my fainting breath;
For who can praise thee in the grave,
Or sing thy name in death?

6 Satan, my cruel envious foe,
Insults me in my pain:
He smiles to see me brought so low,
And tells me hope is vain.

7 But hence, thou enemy, depart.
Nor tempt me to despair;
My Saviour comes to cheer my heart,
The Lord has heard my prave

HYMN XLVI.

NONE UPON EARTH I DESIRE BESIDES THEE. PSAL. lxxiii. 25.

1 How tedious and tasteless the hours,
When Jesus no longer I see;
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers,
Have lost all their sweetness with me;
The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay:
But when I am happy in him,
December's as pleasant as May.

2 His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music his voice;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice:
I should, were he always thus nigh,
Have nothing to wish or to fear;
No mortal so happy as I,
My summer would last all the year

3 Content with beholding his face,
My all to his pleasure resign'd,
No changes of season or place,
Would make any change in my mind
While bless'd with a sense of his love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

4 Dear Lord, if indeed I am thine,
If thou art my sun and my song;
Say why do I languish and pine,
And why are my winters so long?
O drive these dark clouds from my sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me unto thee on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more.

HYMN XLVII.

THE BELIEVER'S SAFETY. PSAL. xci

1 INCARNATE God! the soul that knows
Thy name's mysterious power,
Shall dwell in undisturb'd repose,
Nor fear the trying hour.

2 Thy wisdom, faithfulness, and love,
To feeble helpless worms,
A buckler and a refuge prove
From enemies and storms.

3 In vain the fowler spreads his net,
To draw them from thy care;
Thy timely call instructs their feet
To shun their artful snare.

4 When, like a baneful pestilence,
Sin mows its thousands down
On ev'ry side, without defence
Thy grace secures thine own.

5 No midnight terrors haunt their bed,
No arrow wounds by day;
Unhurt on serpents they shall tread,
If found in duty's way.

6 Angels, unseen, attend the saints,
And bear them in their arms,
To cheer their spirit when it faints,
And guard their life from harms.

7 The angels Lord himself is nigh
To them that love his name;
Ready to save them when they cry,
And put their foes to shame.

8 Crosses and changes are their lot,
Long as they sojourn here;
But since their Saviour changes not,
What have the saints to fear?

HYMN XLVIII.

ANOTHER.

1 THAT man no guard or weapons needs,
Whose heart the blood of Jesus knows;
But safe may pass, if duty leads,
Through burning sands or mountain-snows.

2 Releas'd from guilt, he feels no fear;
Redemption is his shield and tower:
He sees his Saviour always near,
To help in ev'ry trying hour.

3 Though I am weak, and Satan strong,
And often to assault me tries;
When Jesus is my shield and song,
Abash'd, the wolf before me flies.

4 His love possessing I am blest,
Secure whatever change may come;
Whether I go to east or west,
With him I still shall be at home.

5 If plac'd beneath the northern pole,
Though winter reigns with rigour there,
His gracious beams would cheer my soul,
And make a spring throughout the year:

Or if the desert's sun-burnt soil,
My lonely dwelling e'er should prove;
His presence would support my toil,
Whose smile is life, whose voice is love.

HYMN XLIX.

HE LED THEM BY A RIGHT WAY. PSAL. cvii. 7.

1 WHEN Israel was from Egypt freed,
The Lord, who brought them out,
Help'd them in ev'ry time of need,
But led them round about. *

2 To enter Canaan soon they hop'd,
But quickly chang'd their mind,
When the Red Sea their passage stopp'd,
And Pharoah march'd behind.

* Exod. xiii. 17.

3 The desert fill'd them with alarms,
For water and for food;
And Amalek, by force of arms,
To check their progress stood.

4 They often murmur'd by the way,
Because they judg'd by sight;
But were at length constrain'd to say,
The Lord had led them right.

5 In the Red Sea, that stopp'd them first,
Their enemies were drown'd;
The rocks gave water for their thirst,
And manna spread the ground.

6 By fire and cloud their way was shown,
Across the pathless sands;
And Amalek was overthrown
By Moses' lifted hands.

7 The way was right their hearts to prove,
To make God's glory known;
And shew his wisdom, power, and love,
Engag'd to save his own.

8 Just so, the true believer's path,
Through many dangers lies;
Though dark to sense, 'tis right to faith,
And leads us to the skies.

HYMN L.

WHAT SHALL I RENDER? * PSAL. cxvi. 12. 13

1 FOR mercies, countless as the sands,
Which daily I receive
From Jesus my Redeemer's hands,
My soul, what canst thou give?

2 Alas! from such a heart as mine,
What can I bring him forth?
My best is stain'd and dyed with sin,
My all is nothing worth.

3 Yet this acknowledgment I'll make
For all he has bestowed,
Salvation's sacred cup I'll take,
And call upon my God.

4 The best returns for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea,
And ask him still for more.

5 I cannot serve him as I ought,
No works have I to boast;
Yet would I glory in the thought,
That I shall owe him most.

HYMN LI.

DWELLING IN MESECH. PSAL. cxx. 5—7.

1 WHAT a mournful life is mine,
Fill'd with crosses, pains, and cares!
Ev'ry work defiled with sin,
Ev'ry step beset with snares!

* Book III. Hymn lxvii.

2 If alone I pensive sit,
I myself can hardly bear;
If I pass along the street,
Sin and riot triumph there.

3 Jesus! how my heart is pain'd,
How it mourns for souls deceiv'd!
When I hear thy name profan'd,
When I see thy Spirit griev'd.

4 When thy children's griefs I view,
Their distress becomes my own;
All I hear, or see, or do,
Makes me tremble, weep, and groan.

5 Mourning thus I long had been,
When I heard my Saviour's voice:
"Thou hast cause to mourn for sin,
But in me thou may'st rejoice."

6 This kind word dispell'd my grief,
Put to silence my complaints:
Though of sinners I am chief,
He has rank'd me with his saints.

7 Though constrain'd to dwell a while
Where the wicked strive and brawl,
Let them frown, so he but smile,
Heaven will make amends for all.

8 There, believers, we shall rest,
Free from sorrow, sin, and fears;
Nothing shall our peace molest,
Through eternal rounds of years.

9 Let us then the fight endure,
See our Captain looking down;
He will make the conquest sure,
And bestow the promis'd crown.

PROVERBS.

HYMN LII.

WISDOM. CHAP. viii. 22—31.

1 Ere God had built the mountains,
Or rais'd the fruitful hills;
Before he fill'd the fountains
That feed the running rills;
In me, from everlasting,
The wonderful I AM,
Found pleasures never wasting,
And Wisdom is my name.

2 When, like a tent to dwell in,
He spread the skies abroad,
And swath'd about the swelling
Of ocean's mighty flood;
He wrought by weight and measure,
And I was with him then;
Myself the Father's pleasure,
And mine the sons of men.

3 Thus Wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and thy grace,
Thou everlasting lover
Of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye surveyed us,
Ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom thou hast made us,
And died for us in love.

4 And couldst thou be delighted
With creatures such as we!
Who, when we saw thee, slighted,
And nail'd thee to a tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine!
The voice that speaks in thunder,
Says, "Sinner, I am thine!"

C.

HYMN LIII.

A FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER THAN A BROTHER. CHAP. xviii. 24.

1 One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end:
They who once his kindness prove
Find it everlasting love.

2 Which of all our friends to save us,
Could or would have shed their blood!
But our Jesus died to have us
Reconcil'd to him in God:
This was boundless love indeed!
Jesus is a friend in need.

3 Men, when rais'd to lofty stations,
Often know their friends no more;
Slight and scorn their poor relations,
Though they valued them before;
But our Saviour always owns
Those whom he redeem'd with groans.

4 When he liv'd on earth abased,
Friend of sinners was his name;
Now above all glory raised,
He rejoices in the same:
Still he calls them brethren, friends,
And to all their wants attends.

5 Could we bear from one another
What he daily bears from us;
Yet this glorious Friend and Brother
Loves us though we treat him thus:
Though for good we render ill,
He accounts us brethren still.

6 O for grace our hearts to soften!
Teach us, Lord, at length to love,
We, alas! forget too often,
What a friend we have above:
But when home our souls are brought,
We will love thee as we ought.

ECCLESIASTES.

HYMN LIV.

VANITY OF LIFE.* CHAP. i. 2.

1 The evils that beset our path,
Who can prevent or cure?
We stand upon the brink of death,
When most we seem secure.

2 If we to-day sweet peace possess,
It soon may be withdrawn;
Some change may plunge us in distress
Before to-morrow's dawn.

3 Disease and pain invade our health,
And find an easy prey;
And oft, when least expected, wealth
Takes wings and flies away.

4 A fever or a blow can shake
Our wisdom's boasted rule,
And of the brightest genius make
A madman or a fool.

5 The gourds from which we look for fruit,
Produce us only pain;
A worm unseen attacks the root,
And all our hopes are vain.

6 I pity those who seek no more
Than such a world can give:
Wretched they are, and blind, and poor,
And dying while they live.

7 Since sin has fill'd the earth with woe,
And creatures fade and die;
Lord, wean our hearts from things below,
And fix our hopes on high.

HYMN LV.

VANITY OF THE WORLD. ibid.

1 GOD gives his mercies to be spent;
Your hoard will do your soul no good;
Gold is a blessing only lent,
Repaid by giving others food.

2 The world's esteem is but a bribe;
To buy their peace you sell your own;
The slave of a vain-glorious tribe,
Who hate you while they make you known.

3 The joy that vain amusements give,
Oh! sad conclusion that it brings!
The honey of a crowded hive,
Defended by a thousand stings.

4 'Tis thus the world rewards the fools
That live upon her treacherous smiles;
She leads them blindfold by her rules,
And ruins all whom she beguiles.

5 God knows the thousands who go down
From pleasure into endless woe;
And with a long despairing groan,
Blaspheme their Maker as they go.

6 O fearful thought! be timely wise;
Delight but in a Saviour's charms;
And God shall take you to the skies,
Embrac'd in everlasting arms.

C.

HYMN LVI.

VANITY OF THE CREATURE SANCTIFIED. ibid.

1 HONEY though the bee prepares,
An envenom'd sting it wears;
Piercing thorns a guard compose
Round the fragrant blooming rose.

2 Where we think to find a sweet,
Oft a painful sting we meet;
When the rose invites our eye,
We forget the thorn is nigh.

3 Why are thus our hopes beguil'd?
Why are all our pleasures spoil'd?
Why do agony and woe
From our choicest comforts grow?

4 Sin has been the cause of all!
'Twas not thus before the fall;
What but pain, and thorn, and sting,
From the root of sin can spring?

5 Now with every good we find
Vanity and grief entwined;
What we feel, or what we fear,
All our joys embitter here.

6 Yet, through the Redeemer's love,
These afflictions blessings prove;
He the wounding stings and thorns
Into healing med'cines turns.

7 From the earth our hearts they wean,
Teach us on his arm to lean,
Urge us to a throne of grace,
Make us seek a resting-place.

8 In the mansions of our King,
Sweets abound without a sting;
Thornless there the roses blow,
And the joys unmingled flow.

SOLOMON'S SONG.

HYMN LVII.

THE NAME OF JESUS. CHAP. i. 3.

1 HOW sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear

* Book II. Hymn vi.

HYMN LXIII.

TO THE AFFLICTED, TOSSED WITH TEMPESTS, AND NOT COMFORTED. CHAP. liv. 5—11.

1 PENSIVE, doubting, fearful heart,
Hear what Christ the Saviour says;
Every word should joy impart,
Change thy mourning into praise:
Yes, he speaks, and speaks to thee,
May he help thee to believe!
Then thou presently wilt see
Thou hast little cause to grieve.

2 "Fear thou not, nor be asham'd,
All thy sorrows soon shall end:
I who heaven and earth have fram'd,
Am thy husband and thy friend:
I the High and Holy One,
Israel's God, by all ador'd,
As thy Saviour will be known,
Thy Redeemer and thy Lord.

3 For a moment I withdrew,
And thy heart was fill'd with pain;
But my mercies I'll renew,
Thou shalt soon rejoice again:
Though I seem to hide my face,
Very soon my wrath shall cease;
'Tis but for a moment's space,
Ending in eternal peace.

4 When my peaceful bow appears,*
Painted on the wat'ry cloud,
'Tis to dissipate thy fears,
Lest the earth should be o'erflow'd:
'Tis an emblem too of grace,
Of my cov'nant-love a sign;
Though the mountains leave their place,
Thou shalt be for ever mine.

5 Though afflicted, tempest-tossed,
Comfortless a while thou art,
Do not think thou canst be lost,
Thou art graven on my heart:
All thy wastes I will repair,
Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
And in thee it shall appear
What a God of love can do."

HYMN LXIV

THE CONTRITE HEART. CHAP. lvii. 15.

1 THE Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart or no?

2 I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel;
If ought is felt, 'tis only pain,
To find I cannot feel.

* Gen. ix. 13. 14.

3 I sometimes think myself inclined
To love thee if I could,
But often feel another mind,
Averse to all that's good.

4 My best desires are faint and few,
I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry, "My strength renew,"
Seem weaker than before.

5 Thy saints are comforted, I know,
And love thy house of prayer;
I therefore go where others go,
But find no comfort there.

6 O make this heart rejoice or ache!
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break,
And heal it, if it be.

C.

HYMN LXV.

THE FUTURE PEACE AND GLORY OF THE CHURCH. CHAP. lx. 15—20.

1 Hear what God the Lord hath spoken,
O my people, faint and few,
Comfortless, afflicted, broken,
Fair abodes I build for you;
Themes of heart-felt tribulation
Shall no more perplex your ways;
You shall name your walls Salvation,
And your gates shall all be Praise.

2 There, like streams that feed the garden,
Pleasures without end shall flow;
For the Lord, your faith rewarding,
All his bounty shall bestow:
Still in undisturbed possession,
Peace and righteousness shall reign;
Never shall you feel oppression,
Hear the voice of war again.

3 Ye no more your suns descending,
Waning moons no more shall see;
But, your griefs for ever ending,
Find eternal noon in me:
God shall rise, and shining o'er you,
Change to day the gloom of night;
He the Lord shall be your glory,
God your everlasting light.

C.

JEREMIAH.

HYMN LXVI.

TRUST OF THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS COMPARED. CHAP. xvii. 5—8.

1 As parched in the barren sands,
Beneath a burning sky,
The worthless bramble with'ring stands,
And only grows to die:

2 Such is the sinner's awful ease,
Who makes the world his trust,
And dares his confidence to place
In vanity and dust.

3 A secret curse destroys his root,
And dries his moisture up;
He lives a while but bears no fruit,
Then dies without a hope.

4 But happy he whose hopes depend
Upon the Lord alone;
The soul that trusts in such a friend
Can ne'er be overthrown.

5 Though gourds should wither, cisterns break,
And creature-comforts die,
No change his solid hope can shake,
Or stop his sure supply.

6 So thrives and blooms the tree whose roots
By constant streams are fed;
Arrayed in green, and rich in fruits,
It rears its branching head.

7 It thrives though rain should be denied,
And drought around prevail;
'Tis planted by a river's side,
Whose waters cannot fail.

HYMN LXVII.

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU; OR, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. CHAP. xxiii. 6.

1 My God, how perfect are thy ways!
But mine polluted are;
Sin twines itself about my praise,
And slides into my prayer.

2 When I would speak what thou hast done
To save me from my sin,
I cannot make thy mercies known,
But self-applause creeps in.

3 Divine desire, that holy flame
Thy grace creates in me,
Alas! impatience is its name,
When it returns to thee.

4 This heart a fountain of vile thoughts,
How does it overflow!
While self upon the surface floats,
Still bubbling from below.

5 Let others in the gaudy dress,
Of fancied merit shine,
The Lord shall be my righteousness,
The Lord for ever mine.

C.

HYMN LXVIII.

EPHRAIM REPENTING. CHAP. xxxi. 18—20.

1 My God, till I receiv'd thy stroke,
How like a beast was I!
So unaccustom'd to the yoke,
So backward to comply.

2 With grief my just reproach I bear,
Shame fills me at the thought;
How frequent my rebellions were!
What wickedness I wrought!

3 Thy merciful restraint I scorn'd,
And left the pleasant road;
Yet turn me, and I shall be turn'd,
Thou art the Lord my God.

4 Is Ephraim banish'd from my thoughts,
Or vile in my esteem?
No, saith the Lord, with all his faults,
I still remember him.

5 Is he a dear and pleasant child?
Yes, dear and pleasant still;
Though sin his foolish heart beguil'd,
And he withstood my will.

6 My sharp rebuke has laid him low,
He seeks my face again;
My pity kindles at his woe,
He shall not seek in vain.

C.

LAMENTATIONS.

HYMN LXIX.

THE LORD IS MY PORTION. CHAP. iii. 24

1 From pole to pole let others roam,
And search in vain for bliss;
My soul is satisfied at home,
The Lord my portion is.

2 Jesus, who on his glorious throne
Rules heaven, and earth, and sea,
Is pleas'd to claim me for his own,
And give himself to me.

3 His person fixes all my love,
His blood removes my fear;
And while he pleads for me above,
His arm preserves me here.

4 His word of promise is my food,
His Spirit is my guide:
Thus daily is my strength renew'd,
And all my wants supplied.*

5 For him I count as gain each loss,
Disgrace, for him, renown;
Well may I glory in my cross,
While he prepares my crown!

6 Let worldlings then indulge their boast,
How much they gain or spend:
Their joys must soon give up the ghost,
But mine shall know no end.

* Book III. Hymn lix.

EZEKIEL.

HYMN LXX.

HUMBLED AND SILENCED BY MERCY.
CHAP. xvi. 63.

1 ONCE perishing in blood I lay,
Creatures no help could give;
But Jesus pass'd me in the way,
He saw, and bid me live.

2 Though Satan still his rule maintain'd,
And all his arts employed;
That mighty word his rage restrain'd,
I could not be destroyed.

3 At length the time of love arriv'd,
When I my Lord should know;
Then Satan, of his power depriv'd,
Was forc'd to let me go.

4 O can I e'er that day forget,
When Jesus kindly spoke!
"Poor soul! my blood has paid thy debt,
And now I break thy yoke.

5 Henceforth I take thee for my own,
And give myself to thee;
Forsake the idols thou hast known,
And yield thyself to me."

6 Ah, worthless heart! it promis'd fair,
And said it would be thine;
I little thought it e'er would dare
Again with idols join.

7 Lord, dost thou such backslidings heal,
And pardon all that's past?
Sure, if I am not made of steel,
Thou hast prevail'd at last.

8 My tongue which rashly spoke before,
This mercy will restrain;
Surely I now shall boast no more,
Nor censure, nor complain.

HYMN LXXI.

THE COVENANT. CHAP. xxxvi. 25—28.

1 THE Lord proclaims his grace abroad!
Behold I change your hearts of stone;
Each shall renounce his idol-god,
And serve, henceforth, the Lord alone.

2 My grace, a flowing stream, proceeds
To wash your filthiness away;
Ye shall abhor your former deeds,
And learn my statutes to obey.

3 My truth the great design ensures,
I give myself away to you;
You shall be mine, I will be your's,
Your God unalterably true.

4 Yet not unsought, or unimplor'd,
The plenteous grace shall I confer;*
No—your whole heart shall seek the Lord,
I'll put a praying spirit there.

5 From the first breath of life divine,
Down to the last expiring hour,
The gracious work shall all be mine,
Begun and ended in my power.

C.

HYMN LXXII.

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH; OR, THE LORD IS THERE.
CHAP. xlviii. 35.

1 "As birds their infant brood protect,†
And spread their wings to shelter them,"
Thus saith the Lord to his elect,
"Thus will I guard Jerusalem."

2 And what then is Jerusalem,
This darling object of his care?
Where is its worth in God's esteem?
Who built it? who inhabits there!

3 Jehovah founded it in blood,
The blood of his incarnate Son;
There dwell the saints, once foes to God,
The sinners whom he calls his own.

4 There, though besieg'd on every side,
Yet much belov'd and guarded well,
From age to age they have defied
The utmost force of earth and hell.

5 Let earth repent, and hell despair,
This city has a sure defence;
Her name is call'd, The Lord is there,
And who has power to drive him thence?

C.

DANIEL.

HYMN LXXIII.

THE POWER AND TRIUMPH OF FAITH.
CHAP. iii. 6.

1 SUPPORTED by the word,
Though in himself a worm,
The servant of the Lord
Can wondrous acts perform:
Without dismay he boldly treads
Where'er the path of duty leads.

2 The haughty king in vain,
With fury on his brow,
Believers would constrain
To golden gods to bow;
The furnace could not make them fear,
Because they knew the Lord was near.

* Ver. 37. † Isaiah xxxi. 5.

3 As vain was the decree
Which charg'd them not to pray;
Daniel still bow'd his knee,
And worshipp'd thrice a-day:
Trusting in God, he fear'd not men,
Though threaten'd with the lion's den.

4 Secure they might refuse
Compliance with such laws;
For what had they to lose,
When God espous'd their cause?
He made the hungry lions crouch,
Nor durst the fire his children touch.

5 The Lord is still the same,
A mighty shield and tower,
And they who trust his name
Are guarded by his power;
He can the rage of lions tame,
And bear them harmless through the flame.

6 Yet we too often shrink
When trials are in view;
Expecting we must sink,
And never can get through:
But could we once believe indeed,
From all these fears we should be freed.

HYMN LXXIV.

BELSHAZZAR. CHAP. v. 5, 6.

1 POOR sinners! little do they think
With whom they have to do!
But stand securely on the brink
Of everlasting woe.

2 Belshazzar thus, profanely bold,
The Lord of hosts defied;
But vengeance soon his boasts control'd,
And humbled all his pride.

3 He saw a hand upon the wall,
(And trembled on his throne)
Which wrote his sudden dreadful fall
In characters unknown.

4 Why should he tremble at the view
Of what he could not read?
Foreboding conscience quickly knew
His ruin was decreed.

5 See him o'erwhelm'd with deep distress!
His eyes with anguish roll;
His looks and loosen'd joints express
The terrors of his soul.

6 His pomp and music, guests and wine,
No more delight afford;
O sinner! ere this case be thine,
Begin to seek the Lord.

7 The law, like this hand-writing stands,
And speaks the wrath of God;*
But Jesus answers its demands,
And cancels it with blood.

* Col. ii. 14.

JONAH.

HYMN LXXV.

THE GOURD. CHAP. iv. 7

1 As once for Jonah, so the Lord,
To soothe and cheer my mournful hours,
Prepar'd for me a pleasing gourd:
Cool was its shade, and sweet its flowers.

2 To prize his gift was surely right;
But through the folly of my heart,
It hid the giver from my sight,
And soon my joy was turn'd to smart.

3 While I admir'd its beauteous form,
Its pleasant shade and grateful fruit,
The Lord displeas'd sent forth a worm
Unseen to prey upon the root.

4 I trembled when I saw it fade,
But guilt restrain'd the murm'ring word;
My folly I confess'd, and prayed,
Forgive my sin, and spare my gourd.

5 His wondrous love can ne'er be told:
He heard me, and reliev'd my pain;
His word the threatening worm control'd,
And bid my gourd revive again.

6 Now, Lord, my gourd is mine no more,
'Tis thine, who only could'st it raise;
The idol of my heart before,
Henceforth shall flourish to thy praise.

ZECHARIAH.

HYMN LXXVI.

PRAYER FOR THE LORD'S PROMISED PRESENCE CHAP. ii. 10.

1 SON of God, thy people shield!
Must we still thine absence mourn?
Let thy promise be fulfilled,
Thou hast said, "I will return."

2 Gracious Leader, now appear!
Shine upon us with thy light!
Like the spring, when thou art near,
Days and suns are doubly bright.

3 As a mother counts the days
Till her absent son she see,
Longs and watches, weeps and prays,
So our spirits long for thee.

4 Come, and let us feel thee nigh,
Then thy sheep shall feed in peace,
Plenty bless us from on high,
Evil from amongst us cease.

8 Thy thoughts, thou only wise!
Our thoughts and ways transcend,
Far as the arched skies
Above the earth extend: *
Such pleas as mine men would not hear,
But God receives a beggar's prayer.

HYMN LXXXII.

THE LEPER. CHAP. viii. 2. 3.

1 Oft as the leper's case I read,
My own describ'd I feel;
Sin is a leprosy indeed,
Which none but Christ can heal.

2 A while I would have pass'd for well,
And strove my spots to hide:
Till it broke out incurable,
Too plain to be denied.

3 Then from the saints I thought to flee,
And dreaded to be seen:
I thought they all would point at me,
And cry, "Unclean, unclean!"

4 What anguish did my soul endure
Till hope and patience ceas'd!
The more I strove myself to cure,
The more the plague increas'd.

5 While thus I lay distress'd, I saw
The Saviour passing by;
To him, though fill'd with shame and awe,
I rais'd my mournful cry.

6 Lord, thou canst heal me if thou wilt,
For thou canst all things do;
O cleanse my leprous soul from guilt,
My filthy heart renew!

7 He heard, and, with a gracious look,
Pronounc'd the healing word;
"I will,—be clean:" and while he spoke,
I felt my health restor'd.

8 Come, lepers, seize the present hour,
The Saviour's grace to prove;
He can relieve, for he is power;
He will, for he is love.

HYMN LXXXIII.

A SICK SOUL. CHAP. ix. 12.

1 Physician of my sin-sick soul,
To thee I bring my case;
My raging malady control,
And heal me by thy grace.

2 Pity the anguish I endure,
See how I mourn and pine;
For never can I hope a cure
From any hand but thine.

3 I would disclose my whole complaint,
But where shall I begin?
No words of mine can fully paint
That worst distemper, sin.

4 It lies not in a single part,
But through my frame is spread,
A burning fever in my heart,
A palsy in my head.

5 It makes me deaf, and dumb, and blind,
And impotent and lame;
And overclouds, and fills my mind
With folly, fear, and shame.

6 A thousand evil thoughts intrude,
Tumultuous, in my breast;
Which indispose me for my food,
And rob me of my rest.

7 Lord, I am sick, regard my cry,
And set my spirit free;
Say, canst thou let a sinner die,
Who longs to live to thee?

HYMN LXXXIV.

SATAN RETURNING. CHAP. xii. 43—45.

1 When Jesus claims the sinner's heart,
Where Satan ruled before;
The evil spirit must depart,
And dares return no more.

2 But when he goes without constraint,
And wanders from his home,
Although withdrawn, 'tis but a feint,
He means again to come.

3 Some outward change perhaps is seen,
If Satan quit the place;
But though the house seem swept and clean,
Tis destitute of grace.

4 Except the Saviour dwell and reign
Within the sinner's mind,
Satan, when he returns again,
Will easy entrance find.

5 With rage, and malice seven-fold,
He then resumes his sway,
No more by checks to be control'd,
No more to go away.

6 The sinner's former state was bad,
But worse the latter far:
He lives possessed, blind, and mad,
And dies in dark despair.

7 Lord save me from this dreadful end,
And from this heart of mine!
O drive and keep away the fiend,
Who fears no voice but thine!

* Isaiah lv. 8. 9.

HYMN LXXXV.

THE SOWER. CHAP. xiii. 3.

1 Ye sons of earth, prepare the plough,
Break up your fallow-ground:
The sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter blessings round.

2 The seed that finds a stony soil
Shoots forth a hasty blade,
But ill repays the sower's toil,
Soon wither'd, scorch'd, and dead.

3 The thorny ground is sure to baulk
All hopes of harvest there:
We find a tall and sickly stalk,
But not the fruitful ear.

4 The beaten path and high-way side
Receive the trust in vain;
The watchful birds the spoil divide,
And pick up all the grain.

5 But where the Lord of grace and power
Has bless'd the happy field,
How plenteous is the golden store
The deep-wrought furrows yield.

6 Father of mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing grace:
Let the same hand that gives the seed
Provide a fruitful place.

C.

HYMN LXXXVI.

THE WHEAT AND TARES. CHAP. xiii. 37—42.

1 Though in the outward church below
The wheat and tares together grow,
Jesus ere long will weed the crop,
And pluck the tares in anger up.

2 Will it relieve their horrors there,
To recollect their stations here?
How much they heard, how much they knew,
How long amongst the wheat they grew?

3 O this will aggravate their case,
They perish'd under means of grace:
To them the word of life and faith
Became an instrument of death.

4 We seem alike when thus we meet,
Strangers might think we all are wheat;
But to the Lord's all-searching eyes,
Each heart appears without disguise.

5 The tares are spar'd for various ends;
Some for the sake of praying friends;
Others the Lord, against their will,
Employs his counsels to fulfil.

6 But though they grow so tall and strong,
His plan will not require them long:
In harvest, when he saves his own
The tares shall into hell be thrown.

HYMN LXXXVII.

PETER WALKING UPON THE WATER. CHAP. xiv. 28—31.

1 A word from Jesus calms the sea,
The stormy wind controls,
And gives repose and liberty
To tempest-tossed souls.

2 To Peter on the waves he came,
And gave him instant peace:
Thus he to me reveal'd his name,
And bid my sorrows cease.

3 Then, fill'd with wonder, joy, and love,
Peter's request was mine:
Lord, call me down, I long to prove
That I am wholly thine.

4 Unmov'd at all I have to meet
On life's tempestuous sea,
Hard shall be easy, bitter sweet,
So I may follow thee.

5 He heard and smil'd, and bid me try
I eagerly obeyed;
But when from him I turn'd my eye.
How was my soul dismayed.

6 The storm increas'd on ev'ry side,
I felt my spirit shrink,
And soon, with Peter, loud I cried,
"Lord, save me or I sink!"

7 Kindly he caught me by the hand,
And said, "Why dost thou fear?
Since thou art come to my command,
And I am always near.

8 Upon my promise rest thy hope,
And keep my love in view:
I stand engag'd to hold thee up,
And guide thee safely through."

HYMN LXXXVIII.

WOMAN OF CANAAN. CHAP. xv. 22—28

1 Prayer an answer will obtain,
Though the Lord a while delay:
None shall seek his face in vain,
None be empty sent away.

2 When the woman came from Tyre,
And for help to Jesus sought,
Though he granted her desire,
Yet at first he answer'd not.

3 Could she guess at his intent,
When he to his followers said,
"I to Israel's sheep am sent,
Dogs must not have children's bread."

4 She was not of Israel's seed,
But of Canaan's wretched race,
Thought herself a dog indeed:
Was not this a hopeless case?

5 Yet although from Canaan sprung,
Though a dog herself she styl'd,
She had Israel's faith and tongue,
And was own'd for Abrah'm's child.

6 From his words she draws a plea:
"Though unworthy children's bread,
'Tis enough for one like me
If with crumbs I may be fed."

7 Jesus then his heart reveal'd:
"Woman, canst thou thus believe?
I to thy petition yield;
All that thou canst wish, receive."

8 'Tis a pattern set for us,
How we ought to wait and pray:
None who plead and wrestle thus,
Shall be empty sent away.

HYMN LXXXIX.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST? CHAP. xxii. 42.

1 WHAT think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme,
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him.
As Jesus appears in your view,
As he is beloved or not;
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

2 Some take him a creature to be,
A man, or an angel at most;
Sure, these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost:
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in his blood,
Nor on his protection rely,
Unless I were sure he is God.

3 Some call him a Saviour, in word,
But mix their own works with his plan,
And hope he his help will afford,
When they have done all that they can.
If doings prove rather too light
(A little, they own, they may fail),
They purpose to make up full weight,
By casting his name in the scale.

4 Some style him the Pearl of great price,
And say he's the fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys:
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And, while they salute him, betray;
Ah! what will profession like this
Avail in the terrible day?

5 If ask'd, what of Jesus I think?
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;
My shepherd, my husband, my friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my all.

HYMN XC.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS.* CHAP. xxv. 1

1 WHEN, descending from the sky,
The Bridegroom shall appear
And the solemn midnight cry
Shall call professors near,
How the sound our hearts will damp!
How will shame o'erspread each face!
If we only have a lamp,
Without the oil of grace.

2 Foolish virgins then will wake,
And seek for a supply;
But in vain the pains they take,
To borrow or to buy.
Then with those they now despise,
Earnestly they wish to share;
But the best among the wise
Will have no oil to spare.

3 Wise they are, and truly blest,
Who then shall ready be!
But despair will seize the rest,
And dreadful misery:
Once they'll cry, we scorn to doubt,
Though in lies our trust we put;
Now our lamp of hope is out,
The door of mercy shut.

4 If they then presume to plead,
"Lord, open to us now;
We on earth have heard and prayed,
And with thy saints did bow:"
He will answer from his throne,
"Though you with my people mix'd,
Yet to me ye ne'er were known;
Depart, your doom is fix'd."

5 O that none who worship here
May hear that word, "Depart!"
Lord, impress a godly fear
On each professor's heart:
Help us, Lord, to search the camp,
Let us not ourselves beguile;
Trusting to a dying lamp,
Without a stock of oil.

HYMN XCI.

PETER SINNING AND REPENTING. CHAP xxvi. 73.

1 WHEN Peter boasted, soon he fell,
Yet was by grace restor'd;
His case should be regarded well
By all who fear the Lord.

2 A voice it has, and helping hand
Backsliders to recall;
And cautions those who think they stand,
Lest suddenly they fall.

* Book III. Hymn lxxii.

3 He said, "Whatever others do,
With Jesus I'll abide;"
Yet soon, amidst a murd'rous crew,
His suffering Lord denied.

4 He who had been so bold before,
Now trembled like a leaf;
Not only lied, but curs'd and swore,
To gain the more belief.

5 When he blasphem'd, he heard the cock,
And Jesus look'd in love;
At once, as if by lightning struck,
His tongue forebore to move.

6 Deliver'd thus from Satan's snare,
He starts, as from a sleep;
His Saviour's look he could not bear,
But hasted forth to weep.

7 But sure the faithful cock had crow'd
A hundred times in vain,
Had not the Lord that look bestow'd
The meaning to explain.

8 As I, like Peter, vows have made,
Yet acted Peter's part;
So conscience, like the cock, upbraids
My base, ungrateful heart.

9 Lord Jesus, hear a sinner's cry,
My broken peace renew;
And grant one pitying look, that I
May weep with Peter too.

MARK.

HYMN XCII.

THE LEGION DISPOSSESSED. CHAP. v. 18, 19.

1 LEGION was my name by nature,
Satan rag'd within my breast;
Never misery was greater,
Never sinner more possess'd:
Mischievous to all around me,
To myself the greatest foe;
Thus I was when Jesus found me,
Fill'd with madness, sin, and woe.

2 Yet in this forlorn condition,
When he came to set me free,
I replied to my Physician,
"What have I to do with thee?"
But he would not be prevented,
Rescu'd me against my will;
Had he staid till I consented,
I had been a captive still.

3 "Satan, though thou fain wouldst have it,
Know this soul is none of thine;
I have shed my blood to save it,
Now I challenge it for mine:"
Though it long has thee resembled,
Henceforth it shall me obey."
Thus he spoke, while Satan trembled,
Gnash'd his teeth, and fled away.

4 Thus my frantic soul he healed,
Bid my sins and sorrow cease;
"Take," said he, my pardon sealed,
I have sav'd thee, go in peace:"
Rather take me, Lord, to heaven,
Now thy love and grace I know;
Since thou hast my sins forgiven,
Why should I remain below!

5 "Love," he said, "will sweeten labours,
Thou hast something yet to do;
Go and tell your friends and neighbours
What my love has done for you:
Live to manifest my glory,
Wait for heaven a little space;
Sinners, when they hear thy story,
Will repent, and seek my face."

HYMN XCIII

THE RULER'S DAUGHTER RAISED. CHAP. v. 39—42.

1 COULD the creatures help or ease us,
Seldom should we think of prayer;
Few, if any, come to Jesus,
Till reduc'd to self-despair:
Long we either slight or doubt him;
But when all the means we try
Prove we cannot do without him,
Then at last to him we cry.

2 Thus the ruler, when his daughter
Suffer'd much, though Christ was nigh,
Still deferr'd it, till he thought her
At the very point to die:
Though he mourn'd for her condition,
He did not entreat the Lord,
Till he found that no physician
But himself could help afford.

3 Jesus did not once upbraid him,
That he had no sooner come;
But a gracious answer made him,
And went straightway with him home
Yet his faith was put to trial,
When his servants came, and said,
"Though he gave thee no denial,
'Tis too late, the child is dead."

4 Jesus, to prevent his grieving,
Kindly spoke, and eas'd his pain:
"Be not fearful, but believing,
Thou shalt see her live again."
When he found the people weeping,
"Cease," he said; "no longer mourn:
For she is not dead, but sleeping:"
Then they laughed him to scorn.

5 O thou meek and lowly Saviour,
How determin'd is thy love!
Not this rude unkind behaviour
Could thy gracious purpose move;

* Book III. Hymn liv

Soon as he the room had enter'd,
Spoke, and took her by the hand;
Death at once his prey surrender'd,
And she liv'd at his command.

6 Fear not, then, distress'd believer,
Venture on his mighty name;
He is able to deliver,
And his love is still the same:
Can his pity or his power
Suffer thee to pray in vain?
Wait but his appointed hour,
And thy suit thou shalt obtain.

HYMN XCIV.

BUT ONE LOAF.* CHAP. viii. 14.

1 WHEN the disciples cross'd the lake
With but one loaf on board,
How strangely did their hearts mistake
The caution of their Lord!

2 "The leaven of the Pharisees
Beware," the Saviour said:
They thought, it is because he sees
We have forgotten bread.

3 It seems they had forgotten too,
What their own eyes had view'd;
How with what scarce suffic'd for few,
He fed a multitude.

4 If five small loaves, by his command,
Could many thousands serve;
Might they not trust his gracious hand,
That they should never starve?

5 They oft his power and love had known,
And doubtless were to blame;
But we have reason good to own,
That we are just the same.

6 How often has he brought relief,
And every want supplied!
Yet soon, again, our unbelief
Says, "Can the Lord provide?"

7 Be thankful for one loaf to-day,
Though that be all your store;
To-morrow, if you trust and pray,
Shall timely bring you more.

HYMN XCV.

BARTIMEUS. CHAP. x. 47, 48.

1 "MERCY, O thou Son of David!"
Thus blind Bartimeus prayed;
"Others by this word are saved,
Now to me afford thine aid."
Many for his crying chid him,
But he call'd the louder still;
Till the gracious Saviour bid him,
"Come, and ask me what you will."

2 Money was not what he wanted,
Though by begging us'd to live;
But he ask'd, and Jesus granted,
Alms which none but he could give:
"Lord remove this grievous blindness,
Let my eyes behold the day;"
Strait he saw, and, won by kindness,
Follow'd Jesus in the way.

3 Oh! methinks I hear him praising,
Publishing to all around,
"Friends, is not my case amazing?
What a Saviour I have found:
O that all the blind but knew him,
And would be advis'd by me!
Surely would they hasten to him,
He would cause them all to see."

HYMN XCVI.

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER. CHAP. xi. 17.

1 THY mansion is the christian's heart,
O Lord, thy dwelling-place secure!
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door

2 Devoted as it is to thee,
A thievish swarm frequents the place;
They steal away my joys from me,
And rob my Saviour of his praise.

3 There, too, a sharp designing trade,
Sin, Satan, and the world maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade
To part with ease, and purchase pain.

4 I know them, and I hate their din,
Am weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve thee as I would.

5 Oh! for the joy thy presence gives,
What peace shall reign when thou art here;
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm delightful house of prayer.

6 And if thou make thy temple shine,
Yet, self-abas'd, will I adore;
The gold and silver are not mine,
I give thee what was thine before.

C.

HYMN XCVII.

THE BLASTED FIG-TREE. CHAP. xi. 20

1 ONE awful word which Jesus spoke
Against the tree which bore no fruit,
More piercing than the lightning's stroke,
Blasted and dried it to the root.

2 But could a tree the Lord offend
To make him shew his anger thus?
He surely had a farther end,
To be a warning word to us,

*Book III. Hymn lvii

3 The fig-tree by its leaves was known;
But having not a fig to shew,
It brought a heavy sentence down,
"Let none hereafter on thee grow"

4 Too many, who the gospel hear,
Whom Satan blinds, and sin deceives,
We to this fig-tree may compare,
They yield no fruit, but only leaves.

5 Knowledge, and zeal, and gifts, and talk,
Unless combin'd with faith and love,
And witness'd by a gospel-walk,
Will not a true profession prove.

6 Without the fruit the Lord expects,
Knowledge will make our state the worse;
The barren trees he still rejects,
And soon will blast them with his curse.

7 O Lord, unite our hearts in prayer!
On each of us thy Spirit send,
That we the fruits of grace may bear,
And find acceptance in the end.

LUKE.

HYMN XCVIII.

THE TWO DEBTORS. CHAP. vii. 47.

1 ONCE a woman silent stood,
While Jesus sat at meat;
From her eyes she pour'd a flood,
To wash his sacred feet;
Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possess'd her mind,
That she e'er so vile could prove,
Yet now forgiveness find.

2 "How came this vile woman here?
Will Jesus notice such?
Sure, if he a prophet were,
He would disdain her touch!"
Simon thus, with scornful heart,
Slighted one whom Jesus lov'd;
But her Saviour took her part,
And thus his pride reprov'd:

3 "If two men in debt were bound,
One less, the other more,
Fifty, or five hundred pound,
And both alike were poor:
Should the lender both forgive,
When he saw them both distress'd,
Which of them would you believe
Engag'd to love him best?"

4 "Surely he who most did owe,"
The Pharisee replied:
Then our Lord, "By judging so,
Thou dost for her decide;
Simon, if, like her, you knew
How much you forgiveness need;
You like her had acted too,
And welcom'd me indeed.

5 "When the load of sin is felt,
And much foregiveness known,
Then the heart of course will melt,
Though hard before as stone:
Blame not then her love and tears,
Greatly she in debt has been;
But I have remov'd her fears,
And pardon'd all her sin."

6 When I read this woman's case,
Her love and humble zeal,
I confess, with shame of face,
My heart is made of steel.
Much has been forgiven to me,
Jesus paid my heavy score;
What a creature must I be,
That I can love no more!

HYMN XCIX.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN. CHAP. x. 33—35.

1 How kind the good Samaritan
To him who fell among the thieves!
Thus Jesus pities fallen man,
And heals the wounds the soul receives.

2 Oh! I remember well the day,
When sorely wounded, nearly slain,
Like that poor man I bleeding lay,
And groan'd for help, but groan'd in vain.

3 Men saw me in this helpless case,
And pass'd without compassion by;
Each neighbour turn'd away his face,
Unmoved by my mournful cry.

4 But he whose name had been my scorn,
(As Jews Samaritans despise)
Came, when he saw me thus forlorn,
With love and pity in his eyes.

5 Gently he rais'd me from the ground,
Press'd me to lean upon his arm,
And into every gaping wound,
He pour'd his own all-healing balm.

6 Into his church my steps he led,
The house prepar'd for sinners lost,
Gave charge I should be cloth'd and fed,
And took upon him all the cost.

7 Thus sav'd from death, from want secur'd,
I wait till he again shall come,
(When I shall be completely cur'd)
And take me to his heavenly home.

8 There, through eternal boundless days,
When nature's wheel no longer rolls,
How shall I love, adore, and praise,
This good Samaritan to souls!

HYMN C.

MARTHA AND MARY. CHAP. x. 38—42.

1 MARTHA her love and joy express'd,
By care to entertain her guest;
While Mary sat to hear her Lord,
And could not bear to lose a word.

2 The principle, in both the same,
Produc'd in each a different aim;
The one to feast the Lord was led,
The other waited to be fed.

3 But Mary chose the better part,
Her Saviour's words refresh'd her heart;
While busy Martha angry grew,
And lost her time and temper too.

4 With warmth she to her sister spoke,
But brought upon herself rebuke:
"One thing is needful, and but one,
Why do thy thoughts on many run?"

5 How oft are we, like Martha, vex'd,
Encumber'd, hurried, and perplex'd?
While trifles so engross our thought,
The one thing needful is forgot.

6 Lord, teach us this one thing to choose,
Which they who gain can never lose;
Sufficient in itself alone,
And needful, were the world our own.

7 Let grov'lling hearts the world admire,
Thy love is all that I require:
Gladly I may the rest resign,
If the one needful thing be mine!

HYMN CI.

THE HEART TAKEN. CHAP. xi. 21, 22.

1 THE castle of the human heart,
Strong in its native sin,
Is guarded well in every part,
By him who dwells within.

2 For Satan there in arms resides,
And calls the place his own:
With care against assaults provides,
And rules as on a throne.

3 Each traitor thought, on him as chief,
In blind obedience waits;
And pride, self-will, and unbelief,
Are posted at the gates.

4 Thus Satan for a season reigns,
And keeps his goods in peace;
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,
Nor wishes a release.

5 But Jesus, stronger far than he,
In his appointed hour,
Appears to set his people free
From the usurper's power.

6 "This heart I bought with blood," he says,
"And now it shall be mine:"
His voice the strong one arm'd dismays,
He knows he must resign.

7 In spite of unbelief and pride,
And self and Satan's art,
The gates of brass fly open wide,
And Jesus wins the heart.

8 The rebel soul that once withstood
The Saviour's kindest call,
Rejoices now, by grace subdued,
To serve him with her all.

HYMN CII.

THE WORLDLING. CHAP. xii. 16—21.

1 "MY barns are full, my stores increase,
And now, for many years,
Soul, eat and drink, and take thine ease,
Secure from wants and fears."

2 Thus while a worldling boasted once,
As many now presume,
He heard the Lord himself pronounce
His sudden, awful doom.

3 "This night, vain fool, thy soul must pass
Into a world unknown;
And who shall then the stores possess,
Which thou hast call'd thine own?"

4 Thus blinded mortals fondly scheme
For happiness below;
Till death disturbs the pleasing dream,
And they awake to woe.

5 Ah! who can speak the vast dismay
That fills the sinner's mind,
When, torn by death's strong hand away,
He leaves his all behind!

6 Wretches, who cleave to earthly things,
But are not rich to God,
Their dying hour is full of stings,
And hell their dark abode.

7 Dear Saviour, make us timely wise,
Thy gospel to attend,
That we may live above the skies,
When this poor life shall end.

HYMN CIII.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE. CHAP. xiii. 6—9

1 THE church a garden is,
In which believers stand,
Like ornamental trees
Planted by God's own hand;
His Spirit waters all their roots,
And ev'ry branch abounds with fruits.

2 But other trees there are,
In this inclosure grow,
Which, though they promise fair,
Have only leaves to show;
No fruits of grace are on them found,
They stand but cumb'rers of the ground.

3 The under gard'ner grieves,
In vain his strength he spends,
For heaps of useless leaves
Afford him small amends:
He hears the Lord his will make known,
To cut the barren fig-trees down.

4 How difficult his post,
What pangs his bowels move,
To find his wishes cross'd,
His labours useless prove!
His last relief, his earnest prayer,
"Lord, spare them yet another year:

5 Spare them, and let me try,
What farther means may do;
I'll fresh manure apply,
My digging I'll renew;
Who knows but yet they fruit may yield!
If not—'tis just they must be fell'd."

6 If under means of grace
No gracious fruits appear,
It is a dreadful case;
Though God may long forbear,
At length he'll strike the threaten'd blow,*
And lay the barren fig-tree low.

HYMN CIV.

THE PRODIGAL SON. CHAP. xv. 11—24.

1 AFFLICTIONS, though they seem severe,
In mercy oft are sent;
They stopp'd the prodigal's career,
And forc'd him to repent.

2 Although he no relentings felt,
Till he had spent his store;
His stubborn heart began to melt
When famine pinch'd him sore.

3 "What have I gain'd by sin (he said),
But hunger, shame, and fear?
My father's house abounds with bread,
While I am starving here.

4 I'll go and tell him all I've done,
And fall before his face;
Unworthy to be call'd his son,
I'll seek a servant's place."

5 His father saw him coming back,
He saw, and ran, and smiled;
And threw his arms around the neck
Of his rebellious child.

6 "Father, I've sinn'd—but, O forgive!"
"I've heard enough," he said;
"Rejoice, my house, my son's alive,
For whom I mourn'd as dead:

7 Now let the fatted calf be slain,
And spread the news around;
My son was dead, but lives again,
Was lost but now is found."

8 'Tis thus the Lord his love reveals,
To call poor sinners home;
More than a father's love he feels,
And welcomes all that come.

* Book II. Hymn xxvi.

HYMN CV.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS. CHAP. xvi. 19—25.

1 A WORLDLING spent each day
In luxury and state,
While a believer lay
A beggar at his gate:
Think not the Lord's appointment strange,
Death made a great and lasting change.

2 Death brought the saint release
From want, disease, and scorn;
And to the land of peace,
His soul, by angels borne,
In Abrahm's bosom safely placed,
Enjoys an everlasting feast.

3 The rich man also died,
And in a moment fell
From all his pomp and pride
Into the flames of hell;
The beggar's bliss from far beheld,
His soul with double anguish fill'd.

4 "O Abrah'm, send," he cries,
(But his request was vain)
"The beggar from the skies,
To mitigate my pain!
One drop of water I entreat,
To soothe my tongue's tormenting heat."

5 Let all who worldly pelf
And worldly spirits have,
Observe, each for himself,
The answer Abrah'm gave:
"Remember thou wast fill'd with good,
While the poor beggar pin'd for food.

6 Neglected at thy door,
With tears he begg'd his bread:
But now he weeps no more,
His griefs and pains are fled;
His joys eternally will flow,
While thine expire in endless woe."

7 Lord, make us truly wise,
To choose thy people's lot,
And earthly joys despise,
Which soon will be forgot:
The greatest evil we can fear,
Is to possess our portion here!

HYMN CVI.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW.* CHAP. xviii. 1—7.

1 Our Lord, who knows full well
The heart of every saint,
Invites us by a parable,
To pray and never faint.

2 He bows his gracious ear,
We never plead in vain;
Yet we must wait till he appear,
And pray, and pray again.

3 Though unbelief suggest,
Why should we longer wait?
He bids us never give him rest,
But be importunate.

4 'Twas thus a widow poor,
Without support or friend,
Beset the unjust judge's door,
And gain'd at last her end.

5 For her he little car'd,
As little for the laws;
Nor God nor man did he regard,
Yet he espous'd her cause.

6 She urg'd him day and night,
Would no denial take;
At length he said, "I'll do her right,
For my own quiet's sake."

7 And shall not Jesus hear
His chosen when they cry?
Yes, though he may a while forbear,
He'll help them from on high.

8 'Tis nature, truth, and love,
Engage him on their side;
When they are griev'd, his bowels move,
And can they be denied?

9 Then let us earnest be,
And never faint in prayer;
He loves our importunity,
And makes our cause his care.

HYMN CVII.

ZACCHEUS. CHAP. xix. 1—6.

1 Zaccheus climb'd the tree,
And thought himself unknown;
But how surpris'd was he,
When Jesus call'd him down!
The Lord beheld him, though conceal'd,
And by a word his power reveal'd.

2 Wonder and joy at once
Were painted in his face:
"Does he my name pronounce,
And does he know my case?
Will Jesus deign with me to dine?
Lord, I, with all I have, am thine."

3 Thus where the gospel's preach'd,
And sinners come to hear,
The hearts of some are reach'd
Before they are aware:
The word directly speaks to them,
And seems to point them out by name.

4 'Tis curiosity
Oft brings them in the way,
Only the man to see,
And hear what he can say:
But how the sinner starts to find,
The preacher knows his inmost mind.

5 His long forgotten faults
Are brought again in view,
And all his secret thoughts
Reveal'd in public too;
Though compass'd with a crowd about,
The searching word has found him out

6 While thus distressing pain
And sorrow fills his heart:
He hears a voice again,
That bids his fears depart.
Then, like Zaccheus, he is blest,
And Jesus deigns to be his guest.

HYMN CVIII.

THE BELIEVER'S DANGER, SAFETY, AND DUTY CHAP. xxii. 31, 32.

1 "Simon, beware!" the Saviour said,
"Satan, your subtle foe,
Already has his measures laid,
Your soul to overthrow.

2 He wants to sift you all as wheat,
And thinks his victory sure;
But I his malice will defeat,
My prayer shall faith secure."

3 Believers, tremble and rejoice,
Your help and danger view;
This warning has to you a voice,
This promise speaks to you

4 Satan beholds, with jealous eye,
Your privilege and joy;
He's always watchful, always nigh,
To tear and to destroy.

5 But Jesus lives to intercede,
That faith may still prevail;
He will support in time of need,
And Satan's art shall fail.

6 Yet let us not the warning slight,
But watchful still be found;
Though faith cannot be slain in fight,
It may receive a wound.

7 While Satan watches, dare we sleep?
We must our guard maintain;
But, Lord, do thou the city keep,
Or else we watch in vain.*

* Book II. Hymn lx.

* Psal. cxxvii. 1.

HYMN CIX.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM. CHAP. xxiii. 34.

1 "FATHER, forgive," the Saviour said,
"They know not what they do:"
His heart was mov'd when thus he prayed
For me, my friends, and you.

2 He saw that, as the Jews abus'd
And crucified his flesh,
So he by us would be refus'd,
And crucified afresh.

3 Through love of sin, we long were prone
To act as Satan bid;
But now, with grief and shame we own
We knew not what we did.

4 We knew not the desert of sin,
Nor whom we thus defied;
Nor where our guilty souls had been,
If Jesus had not died.

5 We knew not what a law we broke,
How holy, just, and pure!
Nor what a God we durst provoke,
But thought ourselves secure.

6 But Jesus all our guilt foresaw,
And shed his precious blood,
To satisfy the holy law,
And make our peace with God.

7 My sin, dear Saviour, made thee bleed,
Yet didst thou pray for me!
I knew not what I did, indeed,
When ignorant of thee.

HYMN CX.

THE TWO MALEFACTORS. CHAP. xxiii. 39—43.

1 SOVEREIGN grace has power alone
To subdue a heart of stone;
And the moment grace is felt,
Then the hardest heart will melt.

2 When the Lord was crucified,
Two transgressors with him died;
One, with vile blaspheming tongue,
Scoff'd at Jesus as he hung.

3 Thus he spent his wicked breath,
In the very jaws of death;
Perish'd, as too many do,
With the Saviour in his view.

4 But the other, touch'd with grace,
Saw the danger of his case;
Faith receiv'd to own the Lord,
Whom the scribes and priests abhorr'd.

5 "Lord," he prayed, "remember me,
When in glory thou shalt be."
"Soon with me," the Lord replies,
"Thou shalt rest in paradise."

6 This was wondrous grace indeed,
Grace vouchsaf'd in time of need;
Sinners, trust in Jesus' name,
You shall find him still the same.

7 But beware of unbelief,
Think upon the harden'd thief;
If the gospel you disdain,
Christ, to you, will die in vain.

JOHN.

HYMN CXI.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA. CHAP. iv. 28.

1 JESUS, to what didst thou submit,
To save thy dear-bought flock from hell
Like a poor traveller, see him sit,
Athirst and weary, by the well.

2 The woman who for water came,
(What great events on small depend!)
Then learnt the glory of his name,
The well of life, the sinner's friend.

3 Taught from her birth to hate the Jews,
And fill'd with party-pride, at first
Her zeal induc'd her to refuse
Water to quench the Saviour's thirst.

4 But soon she knew the gift of God;
And Jesus, whom she scorn'd before,
Unask'd, that drink on her bestowed,
Which whoso tastes shall thirst no more.

5 His words her prejudice remov'd,
Her sin she felt, relief she found;
She saw and heard, believ'd and lov'd,
And ran to tell her neighbours round.

6 O come, this wondrous man behold,
The promis'd Saviour! this is he
Whom ancient prophecies foretold,
Born, from our guilt to set us free.

7 Like her, in ignorance content,
I worshipp'd long I knew not what;
Like her, on other things intent,
I found him when I sought him not.

8 He told me all that e'er I did,
And told me all was pardon'd too;
And now, like her, as he has bid,
I live to point him out to you

HYMN CXII.

THE POOL OF BETHESDA.* CHAP. v. 2—4.

1 BESIDE the gospel-pool
Appointed for the poor,
From year to year my helpless soul
Has waited for a cure

* Book III. Hymn vii.

2 How often have I seen
The healing waters move,
And others, round me, stepping in,
Their efficacy prove!

3 But my complaints remain;
I feel the very same,
As full of guilt, and fear, and pain,
As when at first I came.

4 O would the Lord appear,
My malady to heal;
He knows how long I've languish'd here
And what distress I feel.

5 How often have I thought,
Why should I longer lie?
Surely the mercy I have sought
Is not for such as I.

6 But whither can I go?
There is no other pool
Where streams of sovereign virtue flow,
To make a sinner whole.

7 Here then, from day to day,
I'll wait, and hope, and try:
Can Jesus hear a sinner pray,
Yet suffer him to die?

8 No: he is full of grace;
He never will permit
A soul that fain would see his face,
To perish at his feet.

HYMN CXIII.

ANOTHER.

1 HERE at Bethesda's pool, the poor,
The wither'd, halt, and blind,
With waiting hearts expect a cure,
And free admittance find.

2 Here streams of wondrous virtue flow,
To heal a sin-sick soul;
To wash the filthy white as snow
And make the wounded whole.

3 The dumb break forth in songs of praise,
The blind their sight receive,
The cripple run in wisdom's ways,
The dead revive and live.

4 Restrain'd to no one case or time,
These waters always move;
Sinners in ev'ry age and clime
Their vital influence prove.

5 Yet numbers daily near them lie,
Who meet with no relief;
With life in view, they pine and die,
In hopeless unbelief.

6 'Tis strange they should refuse to bathe,
And yet frequent the pool;
But none can even wish for faith
While love of sin bears rule

7 Satan their consciences has seal'd,
And stupified their thought,
For, were they willing to be heal'd,
The cure would soon be wrought.

8 Do thou, dear Saviour, interpose,
Their stubborn will constrain;
Or else to them the water flows
And grace is preach'd in vain.

HYMN CXIV.

THE DISCIPLES AT SEA.* CHAP. vi. 16—21.

1 CONSTRAIN'D by their Lord to embark,
And venture without him to sea,
The season tempestuous and dark,
How griev'd the disciples must be!
But though he remain'd on the shore,
He spent the night for them in prayer;
They still were as safe as before,
And equally under his care.

2 They strove, though in vain, for a while,
The force of the waves to withstand;
But when they were wearied with toil,
They saw their dear Saviour at hand.
They gladly received him on board,
His presence their spirits reviv'd,
The sea became calm at his word,
And soon at their port they arriv'd.

3 We, like the disciples, are toss'd
By storms on a perilous deep,
But cannot be possibly lost,
For Jesus has charge of the ship.
Though billows and winds are enrag'd,
And threaten to make us their sport,
This pilot his word has engag'd
To bring us in safety to port.

4 If sometimes we struggle alone,
And he is withdrawn from our view,
It makes us more willing to own
We nothing without him can do:
Then Satan our hopes would assail,
But Jesus is still within call;
And when our poor efforts quite fail,
He comes in good time, and does all.

5 Yet, Lord, we are ready to shrink,
Unless we thy presence perceive;
O save us, we cry, or we sink,
We would, but we cannot believe.
The night has been long and severe,
The winds and the seas are still high;
Dear Saviour, this moment appear,
And say to our souls, "It is I!"†

* Book II. Hymn lxxxvii.
† Book III. Hymn xviii.

HYMN CXV.

WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY? CHAP. vi. 67—69.

1 WHEN any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas! what numbers do!)
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
"Wilt thou forsake me too?"

2 Ah! Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.

3 Yet thou alone hast power, I know,
To save a wretch like me:
To whom, or whither could I go,
If I should turn from thee?

4 Beyond a doubt I rest assur'd,
Thou art the Christ of God,
Who hast eternal life secur'd
By promise and by blood.

5 The help of men and angels join'd
Could never reach my case,
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in thy boundless grace.

6 No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart,
No love but thine can make me blest,
And satisfy my heart.

7 What anguish has that question stirr'd
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,
I humbly answer, No.

HYMN CXVI.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. CHAP. xi. 25.

1 "I AM," saith Christ, "your glorious Head,
(May we attention give!)
The resurrection of the dead,
The life of all that live.

2 By faith in me the soul receives
New life, though dead before;
And he that in my name believes,
Shall live, to die no more.

3 The sinner, sleeping in his grave,
Shall at my voice awake;
And when I once begin to save,
My work I ne'er forsake."

4 Fulfil thy promise, gracious Lord,
On us assembled here;
Put forth thy Spirit with the word,
And cause the dead to hear.

5 Preserve the power of faith alive
In those who love thy name;
For sin and Satan daily strive
To quench the sacred flame

6 Thy power and mercy first prevail'd,
From death to set us free;
And often since our life had fail'd,
If not renew'd by thee.

7 To thee we look, to thee we bow,
To thee for help we call;
Our life and resurrection thou,
Our hope, our joy, our all.

HYMN CXVII.

WEEPING MARY. CHAP. xx. 11—16.

1 MARY to her Saviour's tomb
Hasted at the early dawn;
Spice she brought, and sweet perfume,
But the Lord she lov'd was gone
For a while she weeping stood,
Struck with sorrow and surprise,
Shedding tears, a plenteous flood,
For her heart supplied her eyes

2 Jesus, who is always near,
Though too often unperceiv'd,
Came, his drooping child to cheer,
Kindly asking why she griev'd?
Though at first she knew him not,
When he call'd her by her name,
Then her griefs were all forgot,
For she found he was the same.

3 Grief and sighing quickly fled,
When she heard his welcome voice;
Just before she thought him dead,
Now he bids her heart rejoice.
What a change his word can make,
Turning darkness into day!
You who weep for Jesus' sake,
He will wipe your tears away

4 He who came to comfort her,
When she thought her all was lost,
Will for your relief appear,
Though you now are tempest-toss'd.
On his word your burden cast,
On his love your thoughts employ;
Weeping for a while may last,
But the morning brings the joy.

HYMN CXVIII.

LOVEST THOU ME? CHAP. xxi. 16.

1 HARK, my soul! it is the Lord,
'Tis thy Saviour, hear his word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
"Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?

2 I deliver'd thee when bound,
And, when wounded, heal'd thy wound
Sought thee wand'ring, set thee right,
Turn'd thy darkness into light.

3. Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.

4 Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.

5 Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done,
Partner of my throne shalt be,
Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?'

6 Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee and adore:
O for grace to love thee more!

C.

HYMN CXIX.

ANOTHER.

1 'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?

2 If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard his name

3 Could my heart so hard remain
Prayer a task and burden prove
Ev'ry trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Saviour's love?

4 When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Fill'd with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?

5 If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mix'd with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell me, is it thus with you?

6 Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall:
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?

7 Could I joy his saints to meet,
Chuse the ways I once abhorr'd,
Find at times the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?

8 Lord, decide the doubtful case:
Thou, who art thy people's sun,
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.

9 Let me love thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not lov'd before,
Help me to begin to-day.

ACTS.

HYMN CXX.

THE DEATH OF STEPHEN. CHAP. vii. 54—60

1 As some tall rock amidst the waves,
The fury of the tempest braves,
While the fierce billows, tossing high,
Break at its foot, and, murm'ring, die:

2 Thus they who in the Lord confide,
Though foes assault on ev'ry side,
Cannot be mov'd or overthrown,
For Jesus makes their cause his own.

3 So faithful Stephen, undismayed,
The malice of the Jews surveyed:
The holy joy which fill'd his breast
A lustre on his face impress'd.

4 "Behold!" he said, "the world of light
Is open'd to my strengthen'd sight;
My glorious Lord appears in view,
That Jesus whom ye lately slew.'

5 With such a friend and witness near,
No form of death could make him fear;
Calm, amidst showers of stones, he kneels,
And only for his murd'rers feels.

6 May we, by faith, perceive thee thus,
Dear Saviour, ever near to us!
This sight our peace through life shall keep,
And death be fear'd no more than sleep.

HYMN CXXI.

THE REBEL'S SURRENDER TO GRACE.
LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO? CHAP. ix. 6.

1 LORD, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.

2 All that a wretch could do I tried,
Thy patience scorn'd, thy power defied,
And trampled on thy laws;
Scarcely thy martyrs at the stake
Could stand more steadfast for thy sake,
Than I in Satan's cause.

3 But since thou hast thy love reveal'd
And shown my soul a pardon seal'd,
I can resist no more;
Couldst thou for such a sinner bleed?
Canst thou for such a rebel plead?
I wonder and adore!

4 If thou had'st bid thy thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been:
But mercy has my heart subdu'd,
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,
And now I hate my sin.

5 Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,
Come, take possession of thine own,
For thou hast set me free;
Releas'd from Satan's hard command,
See all my powers waiting stand,
To be employed by thee.

6 My will conform'd to thine would move;
On thee my hope, desire, and love,
In fix'd attention join;
My hands, my eyes, my ears, my tongue,
Have Satan's servants been too long,
But now they shall be thine.

7 And can I be the very same,
Who lately durst blaspheme thy name,
And on thy gospel tread?
Surely each one who hears my case,
Will praise thee, and confess thy grace
Invincible indeed!

HYMN CXXII.

PETER RELEASED FROM PRISON. CHAP. xii. 5—8.

1 FERVENT persevering prayers
Are faith's assur'd resource;
Brazen gates and iron bars
In vain withstand their force.
Peter, when in prison cast,
Though by soldiers kept with care,
Though the doors were bolted fast,
Was soon releas'd by prayer.

2 While he slept, an angel came,
And spread a light around,
Touch'd, and call'd him by his name,
And rais'd him from the ground.
All his chains and fetters burst,
Ev'ry door wide open flew:
Peter thought he dream'd at first,
But found the vision true.

3 Thus the Lord can make a way
To bring his saints relief;
Theirs it is to wait and pray,
In spite of unbelief.
He can break through walls of stone,
Sink the mountain to a plain;
They to whom his name is known,
Can never pray in vain.

4 Thus, in chains of guilt and sin,
Poor sinners sleeping lie;
No alarm is felt within,
Although condemn'd to die;
Till, descending from above,
(Mercy smiling in his eyes)
Jesus, with a voice of love,
Awakes, and bids them rise.

5 Glad the summons they obey,
And liberty desire;
Straight their fetters melt away,
Like wax before the fire:
By the word of him who died,
Guilty prisoners to release,
Every door flies open wide,
And they depart in peace.

HYMN CXXIII.

THE TREMBLING GAOLER. CHAP. xvi. 29—31

1 A BELIEVER free from care,
May in chains or dungeons sing,
If the Lord be with him there,
And be happier than a king:
Paul and Silas thus confin'd,
Though their backs were torn by whips,
Yet, possessing peace of mind,
Sung his praise with joyful lips.

2 Suddenly the prison shook,
Open flew the iron doors;
And the gaoler, terror-struck,
Now his captives help implores:
Trembling at their feet he fell,
"Tell me, Sirs, what must I do,
To be saved from guilt and hell?
None can tell me this but you."

3 "Look to Jesus," they replied;
"If on him thou canst believe,
By the death which he hath died,
Thou salvation shalt receive."
While the living word he heard,
Faith sprang up within his heart;
And, releas'd from all he fear'd,
In their joy his soul had part.

4 Sinners, Christ is still the same,
O that you could likewise fear!
Then the mention of his name
Would be music to your ear:
Jesus rescues Satan's slaves,
His dear wounds still plead, "Forgive!
Jesus to the utmost saves;
Sinners, look to him and live.

HYMN CXXIV.

THE EXORCISTS. CHAP. xix. 13—16.

1 WHEN the apostle wonders wrought,
And heal'd the sick in Jesus' name,
The sons of Sceva vainly thought
That they had power to do the same.

2 On one possess'd they tried their art,
And, naming Jesus preached by Paul,
They charg'd the spirit to depart,
Expecting he'd obey their call.

3 The spirit answered with a mock,
"Jesus I know, and Paul I know;
I must have gone if Paul had spoke:
But who are ye that bid me go?

4 With fury then the man he fill'd,
Who on the poor pretenders flew;
Naked and wounded, almost kill'd,
They fled in all the people's view.

5 Jesus! that name pronounc'd by faith,
Is full of wonder-working power;
It conquers Satan, sin, and death,
And cheers in trouble's darkest hour.

6 But they who are not born again,
Know nothing of it but the sound;
They do not take his name in vain,
When most their zeal and pains abound.

7 Satan their vain attempts derides,
Whether they talk, or pray, or preach;
Long as the love of sin abides,
His power is safe beyond their reach.

8 But you, believers, may rejoice,
Satan well knows your mighty Friend;
He trembles at your Saviour's voice,
And owns he cannot gain his end.

HYMN CXXV.

PAUL'S VOYAGE. CHAP. xxvii.

1 If Paul in Cæsar's court must stand,
He need not fear the sea;
Secur'd from harm on every hand
By the divine decree.

2 Although the ship in which he sail'd
By dreadful storms was toss'd;
The promise over all prevail'd,
And not a life was lost.

3 Jesus, the God whom Paul ador'd,
Who saves in time of need,
Was then confess'd, by all on board,
A present help indeed!

4 Though neither sun nor stars were seen,
Paul knew the Lord was near!
And faith preserv'd his soul serene,
When others shook for fear.

5 Believers thus are toss'd about,
On life's tempestuous main;
But grace assures, beyond a doubt
They shall their port attain.

6 They must, they shall appear one day,
Before their Saviour's throne;
The storms they meet with by the way,
But make his power known.

7 Their passage lies across the brink
Of many a threatening wave;
The world expects to see them sink,
But Jesus lives to save.

8 Lord, though we are but feeble worms,
Yet since thy word is past,
We'll venture through a thousand storms,
To see thy face at last.

ROMANS

HYMN CXXVI.

THE GOOD THAT I WOULD, I DO NOT. CHAP. vii. 19.

1 I WOULD, but cannot sing,
Guilt has untun'd my voice
The serpent's sin-envenom'd sting
Has poison'd all my joys.

2 I know the Lord is nigh,
And would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.

3 I would, but can't repent,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent,
Till Jesus make it soft.

4 I would, but cannot love,
Though wooed by love divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.

5 I would, but cannot rest,
In God's most holy will;
I know what he appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.

6 Oh could I but believe!
Then all would easy be:
I would, but cannot,—Lord, relieve;
My help must come from thee!

7 But if indeed I would,
Though I can nothing do;
Yet the desire is something good,
For which my praise is due.

8 By nature prone to ill,
Till thine appointed hour,
I was as destitute of will,
As now I am of power,

9 Wilt thou not crown at length
The work thou hast begun?
And with a will, afford me strength,
In all thy ways to run?

HYMN CXXVII.

SALVATION DRAWING NEARER. CHAP. xiii

1 DARKNESS overspreads us here,
But the night wears fast away;
Jacob's Star will soon appear,
Leading on eternal day!
Now 'tis time to rouse from sleep,
Trim our lamps, and stand prepar'd
For our Lord strict watch to keep,
Lest he find us off our guard.

2 Let his people courage take,
Bear with a submissive mind
All they suffer for his sake,
Rich amends they soon will find:
He will wipe away their tears,
Near himself appoint their lot;
All their sorrows, pains, and fears,
Quickly then will be forgot.

3 Though already sav'd by grace,
From the hour we first believ'd;
Yet while sin and war have place,
We have but a part receiv'd;
Still we for salvation wait,
Every hour it nearer comes!
Death will break the prison gate,
And admit us to our homes.

4 Sinners, what can you expect?
You who now the Saviour dare,
Break his laws, his grace reject,
You must stand before his bar!
Tremble, lest he say, Depart!
Oh the horrors of that sound!
Lord, make every careless heart
Seek thee while thou may'st be found.

I CORINTHIANS.

HYMN CXXVIII.

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST. CHAP. x. 4.

WHEN Israel's tribes were parch'd with thirst,
Forth from the rock the waters burst,
And all their future journey through
Yielded them drink, and gospel too!

2 In Moses rod a type they saw
Of his severe and fiery law;
The smitten rock prefigur'd him
From whose pierc'd side all blessings stream.

3 But, ah, the types were all too faint,
His sorrows or his worth to paint;
Slight was the stroke of Moses' rod,
But he endur'd the wrath of God.

4 Their outward rock could feel no pain,
But ours was wounded, torn, and slain;
The rock gave but a watery flood,
But Jesus pour'd forth streams of blood.

5 The earth is like their wilderness,
A land of drought and sore distress;
Without one stream from pole to pole,
To satisfy a thirsty soul.

6 But let the Saviour's praise resound;
In him refreshing streams are found;
Which pardon, strength, and comfort give
And thirsty sinners drink and live.

II CORINTHIANS.

HYMN CXXIX.

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE. CHAP. xii. 9.

1 OPPRESS'D with unbelief and sin,
Fightings without, and fears within;
While earth and hell, with force combin'd,
Assault and terrify my mind:

2 What strength have I against such foes,
Such hosts and legions to oppose?
Alas! I tremble, faint, and fall;
Lord, save me, or I give up all.

3 Thus sorely press'd, I sought the Lord,
To give me some sweet cheering word;
Again I sought, and yet again;
I waited long but not in vain.

4 Oh! 'twas a cheering word indeed!
Exactly suited to my need;
"Sufficient for thee is my grace;
Thy weakness my great power displays"

5 Now I despond and mourn no more,
I welcome all I fear'd before; [blest,
Though weak, I'm strong, though troubled
For Christ's own power shall on me rest.

6 My grace would soon exhausted be,
But his is boundless as the sea;
Then let me boast, with holy Paul,
That I am nothing, Christ is all.

GALATIANS.

HYMN CXXX.

THE INWARD WARFARE. CHAP. v. 17.

1 STRANGE and mysterious is my life,
What opposites I feel within!
A stable peace, a constant strife;
The rule of grace, the power of sin:
Too often I am captive led,
Yet daily triumph in my Head.

2 I prize the privilege of prayer,
But oh! what backwardness to pray!
Though on the Lord I cast my care,
I feel its burden every day;
I seek his will in all I do,
Yet find my own is working too.

3 I call the promises my own,
And prize them more than mines of gold
Yet though their sweetness I have known,
They leave me unimpress'd and cold:
One hour upon the truth I feed,
The next I knew not what I read

4 I love the holy day of rest,
When Jesus meets his gather'd saints:
Sweet day, of all the week the best!
For its return my spirit pants;
Yet often, through my unbelief,
It proves a day of guilt and grief.

5 While on my Saviour I rely,
I know my foes shall lose their aim,
And therefore dare their power defy,
Assur'd of conquest through his name;
But soon my confidence is slain,
And all my fears return again.

6 Thus diff'rent powers within me strive,
And grace and sin by turns prevail;
I grieve, rejoice, decline, revive,
And victory hangs in doubtful scale:
But Jesus has his promise past,
That grace shall overcome at last.

PHILIPPIANS.

HYMN CXXXI.

CONTENTMENT.* CHAP. iv. 11.

1 FIERCE passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea;
But calm content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to thee.

2 In vain by reason and by rule
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heavenly skill.

3 Since at his feet my soul has sat
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on him my care.

4 "Art thou a sinner, soul?" he said,
"Then how canst thou complain?
How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd
With everlasting pain!

5 If thou of murm'ring wouldst be cur'd
Compare thy griefs with mine;
Think what my love for thee endur'd
And thou wilt not repine.

6 'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
And I do all things well;
Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
And rise with me to dwell.

7 In life my grace shall strength supply,
Proportion'd to thy day
At death thou still shalt find me nigh
To wipe thy tears away."

* Book III. Hymn lv.

8 Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,
Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learn'd to be content.

C.

HEBREWS.

HYMN CXXXII.

OLD TESTAMENT GOSPEL. CHAP. iv. 2.

1 ISRAEL, in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the gospel too:
The types and figures were a glass,
In which they saw the Saviour's face.

2 The paschal sacrifice,
And blood-besprinkled door,*
Seen with enlighten'd eyes,
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile an angry God.

3 The lamb, the dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,†
Whose blood of matchless worth,
Should be the soul's defence;
For he who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of his own.

4 The scape-goat on his head‡
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more:
In him our Surety seem'd to say,
"Behold, I bear your sins away."

5 Dipt in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free;§
The type, well understood,
Express'd the sinner's plea,
Describ'd a guilty soul enlarg'd,
And by a Saviour's death discharg'd

6 Jesus, I love to trace
Throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of thy grace,
The same in ev'ry age.
O grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsaf'd to me!

C.

* Exodus xii. 13. † Lev. xii. 6.
‡ Lev. xvi. 21. § Lev xiv. 51—53

HYMN CXXXIII.

THE WORD QUICK AND POWERFUL. CHAP. iv. 12, 13.

1 THE word of Christ, our Lord,
With whom we have to do,
Is sharper than a two-edg'd sword,
To pierce the sinner through:

2 Swift as the lightning's blaze,
When awful thunders roll,
It fills the conscience with amaze,
And penetrates the soul.

3 No heart can be conceal'd
From his all-piercing eyes;
Each thought and purpose stands reveal'd,
Naked, without disguise.

4 He sees his people's fears,
He notes their mournful cry,
He counts their sighs and falling tears,
And helps them from on high.

5 Though feeble is their good,
It has its kind regard;
Yea, all they would do if they could,*
Shall find a sure reward.

6 He sees the wicked too,
And will repay them soon,
For all the evil deeds they do,
And all they would have done.†

7 Since all our secret ways
Are mark'd and known by thee
Afford us, Lord, thy light of grace,
That we ourselves may see.

HYMN CXXXIV.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS. CHAP. xii. 2.

1 BY various maxims, forms, and rules,
That pass for wisdom in the schools,
I strove my passion to restrain,
But all my efforts prov'd in vain.

2 But since the Saviour I have known,
My rules are all reduc'd to one,
To keep my Lord, by faith, in view;
This strength supplies, and motives too.

3 I see him lead a suff'ring life,
Patient amidst reproach and strife;
And from his pattern courage take,
To bear and suffer for his sake.

4 Upon the cross I see him bleed,
And by the sight from guilt am freed;
This sight destroys the life of sin,
And quickens heavenly life within.

5 To look to Jesus as he rose,
Confirms my faith, disarms my foes;
Satan I shame and overcome,
By pointing to my Saviour's tomb.

6 Exalted on his glorious throne,
I see him make my cause his own;
Then all my anxious cares subside,
For Jesus lives, and will provide.

7 I see him look with pity down,
And hold in view the conq'ror's crown;
If press'd with griefs and cares before,
My soul revives, nor asks for more.

8 By faith I see the hour at hand,
When in his presence I shall stand;
Then it will be my endless bliss,
To see him where, and as he is

HYMN CXXXV.

LOVE-TOKENS. CHAP. xii. 5—11.

1 AFFLICTIONS do not come alone,
A voice attends the rod;
By both he to his saints is known,
A Father and a God!

2 "Let not my children slight the stroke
I for chastisement send,
Nor faint beneath my kind rebuke,
For still I am their friend.

3 The wicked I perhaps may leave
A while, and not reprove;
But all the children I receive,
I scourge, because I love.

4 If, therefore, you are left without
This needful discipline,
You might with cause admit a doubt,
If you, indeed, were mine.

5 Shall earthly parents then expect
Their children to submit?
And will not you, when I correct,
Be humbled at my feet?

6 To please themselves they oft chastise,
And put their sons to pain;
But you are precious in my eyes,
And shall not smart in vain.

7 I see your hearts at present fill'd
With grief and deep distress;
But soon these bitter seeds shall yield
The fruits of righteousness."

8 Break through the clouds, dear Lord, and shine,
Let us perceive thee nigh!
And to each mourning child of thine
These gracious words apply.

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* 1 Kings, viii. 18. † Matth. v. 28.

REVELATION.

HYMN CXXXVI.

EPHESUS. CHAP. ii. 1—7.

1 Thus saith the Lord to Ephesus,
And thus he speaks to some of us:—
"Amidst my churches, lo, I stand,
And hold the pastors in my hand:

2 Thy works to me are fully known,
Thy patience and thy toil I own;
Thy views of gospel-truth are clear,
Nor canst thou other doctrine bear.

3 Yet I must blame while I approve;
Where is thy first, thy fervent love?
Dost thou forget my love to thee?
That thine is grown so faint to me!

4 Recall to mind the happy days,
When thou wast fill'd with joy and praise;
Repent, thy former works renew,
Then I'll restore thy comforts too.

5 Return at once, when I reprove,
Lest I thy candlestick remove;
And thou, too late, thy loss lament,
I warn before I strike,—Repent."

6 Hearken to what the Spirit saith,
To him that overcomes by faith,
"The fruit of life's unfading tree,
In paradise his food shall be."

HYMN CXXXVII.

SMYRNA. CHAP. ii. 11.

1 The message first to Smyrna sent,
A message full of grace,
To all the Saviour's flock is meant,
In ev'ry age and place.

2 Thus to his church, his chosen bride,
Saith the great First and Last,
Who ever lives, though once he died,
"Hold thy profession fast.

3 Thy works and sorrow well I know,
Perform'd and borne for me;
Poor though thou art, despis'd and low,
Yet who is rich like thee?

4 I know thy foes, and what they say,
How long they have blasphem'd;
The synagogue of Satan they,
Though they would Jews be deem'd.

5 Though Satan for a season rage,
And prisons be your lot,
I am your friend, and I engage
You shall not be forgot.

6 Be faithful unto death, nor fear
A few short days of strife;
Behold! the prize you soon shall wear,
A crown of endless life!"

7 Hear what the Holy Spirit saith
Of all who overcome;
"They shall escape the second death,
The sinner's awful doom!"

HYMN CXXXVII.

SARDIS. CHAP. iii. 1—6.

1 "Write to Sardis," saith the Lord,
And write what he declares,
He whose Spirit, and whose Word,
Uphold the seven stars:
"All thy works and ways I search,
Find thy zeal and love decayed;
Thou art call'd a living church,
But thou art cold and dead.

2 Watch, remember, seek, and strive,
Exert thy former pains;
Let thy timely care revive
And strengthen what remains;
Cleanse thine heart, thy works amend,
Former times to mind recall,
Lest my sudden stroke descend,
And smite thee once for all.

3 Yet I number now in thee
A few that are upright;
These my Father's face shall see,
And walk with me in white:
When in judgment I appear,
They for mine shall be confess'd:
Let my faithful servants hear,
And woe be to the rest!"

C.

HYMN CXXXIX.

PHILADELPHIA. CHAP. iii. 7—13.

1 Thus saith the holy One and true,
To his beloved faithful few,
"Of heaven and hell I hold the keys,
To shut, or open, as I please.

3 I know thy works, and I approve;
Though small thy strength, sincere thy love,
Go on, my word and name to own,
For none shall rob thee of thy crown.

3 Before thee see my mercy's door
Stands open wide, to shut no more;
Fear not temptation's fiery day,
For I will be thy strength and stay.

4 Thou hast my promise, hold it fast,
The trying hour will soon be past;
Rejoice, for, lo! I quickly come,
To take thee to my heavenly home

5 A pillar there, no more to move,
Inscrib'd with all my names of love;
A monument of mighty grace,
Thou shalt for ever have a place."

6 Such is the conqueror's reward,
Prepar'd and promis'd by the Lord!
Let him that hath the ear of faith,
Attend to what the Spirit saith.

HYMN CXL.

LAODICEA. CHAP. iii. 14—20.

1 HEAR what the Lord, the great Amen,
The true and faithful witness says!
He form'd the vast creation's plan,
And searches all our hearts and ways.

2 To some he speaks, as once of old,
"I know thee, thy profession's vain;
Since thou art neither hot nor cold,
I'll spit thee from me with disdain.

3 Thou boasted, "I am wise and rich,
Increas'd in goods, and nothing need;"
And dost not know thou art a wretch,
Naked, and poor, and blind, and dead.

4 Yet while I thus rebuke, I love,
My message is in mercy sent;
That thou may st my compassion prove,
I can forgive if thou repent.

5 Wouldst thou be truly rich and wise!
Come, buy my gold in fire well tried,
My ointment to anoint thine eyes,
My robe thy nakedness to hide.

6 See at thy door I stand and knock!
Poor sinner, shall I wait in vain?
Quickly thy stubborn heart unlock,
That I may enter with my train.

7 Thou canst not entertain a king,
Unworthy thou of such a guest,
But I my own provisions bring,
To make thy soul a heavenly feast."

HYMN CXLI.

THE LITTLE BOOK*. CHAP. x.

1 WHEN the belov'd desciple took
The angel's little open book,
Which, by the Lord's command, he ate,
It tasted bitter after sweet.

2 Thus when the gospel is embrac'd,
At first 'tis sweeter to the taste
Than honey, or the honey-comb,
But there's a bitterness to come.

3 What sweetness does the promise yield,
When by the Spirit's power seal'd!
The longing soul is fill'd with good,
Nor feels a wish for other food.

4 By these inviting tastes allur'd
We pass to what must be endur'd;
For soon we find it is decreed,
That bitter must to sweet succeed.

5 When sin revives, and shews its power,
When Satan threatens to devour,
When God afflicts, and men revile,
We draw our steps with pain and toil.

6 When thus deserted, tempest-toss'd,
The sense of former sweetness lost,
We tremble lest we were deceiv'd,
In thinking that we once believ'd.

7 The Lord first makes the sweetness known,
To win and fix us for his own;
And though we now some bitter meet,
We hope for everlasting sweet.

* Book III. Hymn xxvii.

OLNEY HYMNS,

&c.

BOOK II.

ON OCCASIONAL SUBJECTS.

I. SEASONS.

NEW-YEAR HYMNS.

HYMN I.

TIME HOW SWIFT

1 While with ceaseless course the sun
Hasted through the former year,
Many souls their race have run,
Never more to meet us here:
Fix'd in an eternal state,
They have done with all below;
We a little longer wait,
But how little none can know.

2 As the winged arrow flies,
Speedily the mark to find;
As the lightning from the skies
Darts, and leaves no trace behind:
Swiftly thus our fleeting days
Bear us down life's rapid stream;
Upwards, Lord, our spirits raise,
All below is but a dream.

3 Thanks for mercies past receive,
Pardon of our sins renew;
Teach us henceforth how to live,
With eternity in view:
Bless thy word to young and old,
Fill us with a Saviour's love;
And when life's short tale is told,
May we dwell with thee above.

HYMN II.

TIME HOW SHORT.

1 Time, with an unwearied hand,
Pushes round the seasons past:
And in life's frail glass the sand
Sinks apace, not long to last;
Many as well as you or I,
Who last year assembled thus,
In their silent graves now lie;
Graves will open soon for us.

2 Daily sin, and care, and strife,
While the Lord prolongs our breath,
Make it but a dying life,
Or a kind of living death:
Wretched they, and most forlorn,
Who no better portion know;
Better ne'er to have been born
Than to have our all below.

3 When constrain'd to go alone,
Leaving all you love behind,
Ent'ring on a world unknown,
What will then support your mind?
When the Lord his summons sends,*
Earthly comforts lose their power;
Honour, riches, kindred, friends,
Cannot cheer a dying hour.

* Isaiah x. 3

4 Happy souls, who fear the Lord;
Time is not too swift for you;
When your Saviour gives the word,
Glad you'll bid the world adieu:
Then he'll wipe away your tears,
Near himself appoint your place;
Swifter fly, ye rolling years,
Lord, we long to see thy face.

HYMN III.

UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE.

1 See, another year is gone!
Quickly have the seasons pass'd!
This we enter now upon
May to many prove their last:
Mercy hitherto has spar'd,
But have mercies been improv'd?
Let us ask, Am I prepar'd,
Should I be this year remov'd?

2 Some we now no longer see,
Who their mortal race have run,
Seem'd as fair for life as we,
When the former year begun:
Some, but who God only knows,
Who are here assembled now,
Ere the present year shall close,
To the stroke of death must bow.

3 Life a field of battle is,
Thousands fall within our view,
And the next death-bolt that flies,
May be sent to me or you.
While we preach and while we hear,
Help us, Lord, each one to think,
Vast eternity is near,
I am standing on the brink.

4 If, from guilt and sin set free,
By the knowledge of thy grace,
Welcome, then, the call will be,
To depart and see thy face.
To thy saints, while here below,
With new years, new mercies come;
But the happiest year they know,
Is their last, which leads them home.

HYMN IV.

A NEW-YEAR'S THOUGHT AND PRAYER.

1 Time by moments steals away,
First the hour, and then the day;
Small the daily loss appears,
Yet it soon amounts to years:
Thus another year is flown,
Now it is no more our own,
If it brought or promis'd good,
Than the years before the flood.

2 But (may none of us forget)
It has left us much in debt;
Favours from the Lord receiv'd,
Sins that have his Spirit griev'd,
Mark'd by an unerring hand,
In his book recorded stand:
Who can tell the vast amount
Plac'd to each of our account?

3 Happy the believing soul,
Christ for you has paid the whole:
While you own the debt is large,
You may plead a full discharge;
But, poor careless sinner, say,
What can you to justice pay?
Tremble, lest when life is past,
Into prison you be cast.

4 Will you still increase the score?
Still be careless as before?
O forbid it, gracious Lord!
Touch their spirits by thy word!
Now in mercy to them show
What a mighty debt they owe!
All their unbelief subdue,
Let them find forgiveness too.

5 Spar'd to see another year,
Let thy blessing meet us here;
Come, thy dying work revive,
Bid thy drooping garden thrive.
Sun of righteousness, arise!
Warm our hearts, and bless our eyes;
Let our prayer thy bowels move,
Make this year a time of love.

HYMN V.

DEATH AND WAR. 1778.

1 Hark, how time's wide sounding bell
Strikes on each attentive ear!
Tolling loud the solemn knell
Of the late departed year;
Years, like mortals, wear away,
Have their birth and dying day,
Youthful spring, and wintry age,
Then to others quit the stage.

2 Sad experience may relate
What a year the last has been!
Crops of sorrow have been great,
From the fruitful seeds of sin;
Oh! what numbers gay and blythe,
Fell by death's unsparing scythe!
While they thought the world their own,
Suddenly he mow'd them down.

3 See, how war, with dreadful stride,
Marches at the Lord's command,
Spreading desolation wide,
Through a once much favour'd land;
War, with heart and arms of steel,
Preys on thousands at a meal;
Daily drinking human gore,
Still he thirsts and calls for more.

4 If the God whom we provoke,
Hither should his way direct,
What a sin-avenging stroke
May a land like this expect!
They who now securely sleep,
Quickly then would wake and weep;
And too late would learn to fear,
When they saw the danger near.

5 You are safe who know his love,
He will all his truth perform;
To your souls a refuge prove,
From the rage of every storm:
But we tremble for the youth;
Teach them, Lord, thy saving truth;
Join them to thy faithful few,
Be to them a refuge too.

HYMN VI.

EARTHLY PROSPECTS DECEITFUL.

1 Oft in vain the voice of truth
Solemnly and loudly warns;
Thoughtless, unexperienc'd youth,
Though it hears, the warning scorns.
Youth in fancy's glass surveys
Life prolong'd to distant years,
While the vast imagin'd space
Fill'd with sweets and joys appears.

2 Awful disappointment soon
Overclouds the prospect gay;
Some their sun goes down at noon,
Torn by death's strong hand away:
Where are then their pleasing schemes?
Where the joys they hope to find?
Gone for ever, like their dreams,
Leaving not a trace behind.

3 Others, who are spar'd a while,
Live to weep o'er fancy's cheat;
Find distress, and pain, and toil,
Bitter things instead of sweet:
Sin has spread a curse around,
Poison'd all things here below;
On this base polluted ground,
Peace and joy can never grow.

4 Grace alone can cure our ills,
Sweeten life with all its cares;
Regulate our stubborn wills,
Save us from surrounding snares.
Though you oft have heard in vain,
Former years in folly spent,
Grace invites you yet again,
Once more calls you to repent.

5 Call'd again, at length, beware,
Hear the Saviour's voice, and live;
Lest he in his wrath should swear,
He no more will warning give.
Pray that you may hear and feel,
Ere the day of grace be past;
Lest your hearts grow hard as steel,
Or this year should prove your last.

HYMNS

BEFORE ANNUAL SERMONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ON NEW-YEAR EVENINGS.

HYMN VII.

PRAYER FOR A BLESSING.

1 Now, gracious Lord, thine arm reveal,
And make thy glory known;
Now let us all thy presence feel,
And soften hearts of stone!

2 Help us to venture near thy throne,
And plead a Saviour's name;
For all that we can call our own,
Is vanity and shame.

3 From all the guilt of former sin
May mercy set us free;
And let the year we now begin,
Begin and end with thee.

4 Send down thy Spirit from above,
That saints may love thee more,
And sinners now may learn to love,
Who never lov'd before.

5 And when before thee we appear
In our eternal home,
May growing numbers worship here,
And praise thee in our room.

HYMN VIII

ANOTHER.

1 Bestow, dear Lord, upon our youth,
The gift of saving grace;
And let the seed of sacred truth
Fall in a fruitful place.

2 Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heavenly root;
But fairest in the youngest shews,
And yields the sweetest fruit.

3 Ye careless ones, O hear betimes
The voice of sovereign love!
Your youth is stain'd with many crimes,
But mercy reigns above.

4 True, you are young, but there's a stone
Within the youngest breast,
Or half the crimes which you have done,
Would rob you of your rest.

5 For you the public prayer is made,
Oh! join the public prayer!
For you the sacred tear is shed,
O shed yourselves a tear!

6 We pray that you may early prove
The Spirit's power to teach;
You cannot be too young to love
That Jesus whom we preach.

C.

HYMN IX.

ANOTHER.

1 Now may fervent prayer arise,
Wing'd with faith and pierce the skies;
Fervent prayer shall bring us down
Gracious answers from the throne.

2 Bless, O Lord, the op'ning year,
To each soul assembled here;
Clothe thy word with power divine,
Make us willing to be thine.

3 Shepherd of thy blood-bought sheep!
Teach the stony heart to weep:
Let the blind have eyes to see,
See themselves and look on thee!

4 Let the minds of all our youth
Feel the force of sacred truth;
While the gospel-call they hear,
May they learn to love and fear.

5 Shew them what their ways have been,
Shew them the desert of sin;
Then thy dying love reveal,
This shall melt a heart of steel.

6 Where thou hast thy work begun,
Give new strength the race to run;
Scatter, darkness, doubts, and fears,
Wipe away the mourner's tears.

7 Bless us all, both old and young;
Call forth praise from every tongue;
Let the whole assembly prove
All thy power, and all thy love.

HYMN X.

CASTING THE GOSPEL-NET.

1 When Peter, through the tedious night,*
Had often cast his net in vain,
Soon as the Lord appear'd in sight,
He gladly let it down again.

2 Once more the gospel-net we cast,
Do thou, O Lord, the effort own;
We learn from dissappointments past,
To rest our hope on thee alone.

3 Upheld by thy supporting hand,
We enter on another year;
And now we meet at thy command,
To seek thy gracious presence here.

4 May this be a much-favour'd hour
To souls in Satan's bondage led;
O clothe thy word with sovereign power
To break the rocks, and raise the dead!

* Luke v. 4.

5 Have mercy on our num'rous youth,
Who, young in years, are old in sin:
And by thy Spirit, and thy truth,
Shew them the state their souls are in.

6 Then by a Saviour's dying love,
To every wounded heart reveal'd,
Temptations, fears, and guilt remove,
And be their sun, and strength, and shield.

7 To mourners speak a cheering word,
On seeking souls vouchsafe to shine;
Let poor backsliders be restor'd,
And all thy saints in praises join.

8 O hear our prayer, and give us hope,
That when thy voice shall call us home,
Thou still wilt raise a people up,
To love and praise thee in our room.

HYMN XI.

PLEADING FOR AND WITH YOUTH.

1 Sin has undone our wretched race,
But Jesus has restor'd,
And brought the sinner face to face
With his forgiving Lord.

2 This we repeat, from year to year,
And press upon our youth;
Lord, give them an attentive ear,
Lord, save them by thy truth.

3 Blessings upon the rising race!
Make this a happy hour,
According to thy richest grace,
And thine almighty power.

4 We feel for your unhappy state,
(May you regard it too)
And would a while ourselves forget,
To pour out prayer for you.

5 We see, though you perceive it not,
The approaching, awful doom;
O tremble at the solemn thought,
And flee the wrath to come.

6 Dear Saviour, let this new-born year
Spread an alarm abroad;
And cry, in every careless ear,
"Prepare to meet thy God!"

C

HYMN XII.

PRAYER FOR CHILDREN.

1 Gracious Lord, our children see,
By thy mercy we are free;
But shall these, alas! remain,
Subjects still of Satan's reign;
Israel's young ones, when of old
Pharoah threaten'd to with-hold;
Then thy messenger said, "No,
Let the children also go."*

* Exod. x. 9.

2 When the angel of the Lord,
Drawing forth his dreadful sword,
Slew, with an avenging hand,
All the first-born of the land; *
Then thy people's doors he pass'd,
Where the bloody sign was placed:
Hear us now, upon our knees,
Plead the blood of Christ for these!

3 Lord, we tremble, for we know
How the fierce malicious foe,
Wheeling round his watchful flight,
Keeps them ever in his sight:
Spread thy pinions, King of kings!
Hide them safe beneath thy wings;
Lest the rav'nous bird of prey
Stoop, and bear the brood away.

C.

HYMN XIII.

THE SHUNAMITE. †

1 The Shunamite, oppress'd with grief,
When she had lost the son she lov'd
Went to Elisha for relief,
Nor vain her application prov'd.

2 He sent his servant on before,
To lay a staff upon his head;
This he could do, but do no more;
He left him, as he found him,—dead.

3 But when the Lord's almighty power
Wrought with the prophet's prayer and faith,
The mother saw a joyful hour,
She saw her child restor'd from death.

4 Thus, like the weeping Shunamite,
For many dead in sin we grieve;
Now, Lord, display thine arm of might,
Cause them to hear thy voice and live.

5 Thy preachers bear the staff in vain,
Though at thine own command we go;
Lord, we have tried and tried again,
We find them dead, and leave them so.

6 Come then thyself—to ev'ry heart
The glory of thy name make known;
The means are our appointed part,
The power and grace are thine alone.

HYMN XIV.

ELIJAH'S PRAYER. ‡

1 Does it not grief and wonder move,
To think of Israel's shameful fall?
Who needed miracles to prove
Whether the Lord was God or Baal!

2 Methinks I see Elijah stand,
His features glow with love and zeal:
In faith and prayer he lifts his hand,
And makes to heaven his great appeal.

3 "O God, if I thy servant am,
If 'tis thy message fills my heart,
Now glorify thy holy name,
And shew this people who thou art!"

4 He spake, and, lo! a sudden flame
Consum'd the wood, the dust, the stone;
The people struck, at once proclaim,
"The Lord is God, the Lord alone."

5 Like him, we mourn, an awful day,
When more for Baal than God appear;
Like him, believers, let us pray,
And may the God of Israel hear!

6 Lord, if thy servant speak thy truth,
If he indeed is sent by thee,
Confirm the word to all our youth,
And let them thy salvation see.

7 Now may thy Spirit's holy fire
Pierce every heart that hears thy word,
Consume each hurtful vain desire,
And make them know thou art the Lord.

HYMN XV.

PREACHING TO THE DRY BONES. *

1 Preachers may, from Ezekiel's case,
Draw hope in this declining day;
A proof, like this, of sovereign grace,
Should chace our unbelief away

2 When sent to preach to mould'ring bones,
Who could have thought he would succeed
But well he knew the Lord from stones
Could raise up Abrah'm's chosen seed.

3 Can these be made a num'rous host,
And such dry bones new life receive?
The prophet answer'd, "Lord, thou know'st
They shall, if thou commandment give."

4 Like him, around I cast my eye,
And, oh! what heaps of bones appear;
Like him, by Jesus sent, I'll try,
For he can cause the dead to hear.

5 Hear, ye dry bones, the Saviour's word!
He, who, when dying, gasp'd, "Forgive,"
That gracious sinner-loving Lord
Says, "Look to me, dry bones, and live."

6 Thou heavenly wind, awake and blow,
In answer to the prayer of faith;
Now thine almighty influence show,
And fill dry bones with living breath.

7 O make them hear, and feel, and shake,
And at thy call obedient move;
The bonds of death and Satan break,
And bone to bone unite in love.

* Exod. xii. 13. † 2 Kings iv. 31. ‡ 1 Kings xviii.

* Ezek. xxxvii.

HYMN XVI

THE ROD OF MOSES.

1 When Moses wav'd his mystic rod,
What wonders follow'd while he spoke!
Firm as a wall the waters stood,*
Or gush'd in rivers from the rock! †

2 At his command the thunders roll'd,
Lightning and hail his voice obeyed,‡
And Pharaoh trembled to behold
His land in desolation laid.

3 But what could Moses' rod have done,
Had he not been divinely sent?
The power was from the Lord alone,
And Moses but the instrument.

4 O Lord, regard thy people's prayers!
Assist a worm to preach aright;
And since thy gospel-rod he bears,
Display thy wonders in our sight.

5 Proclaim the thunders of thy law,
Like lightning let thine arrows fly,
That careless sinners, struck with awe,
For refuge may to Jesus cry!

6 Make streams of godly sorrow flow
From rocky hearts, unus'd to feel;
And let the poor in spirit know,
That thou art near, their griefs to heal.

7 But chiefly, we would now look up
To ask a blessing for our youth,
The rising generation's hope,
That they may know and love thy truth.

8 Arise, O Lord, afford a sign,
Now shall our prayers success obtain;
Since both the means and power are thine,
How can the rod be rais'd in vain!

HYMN XVII.

GOD SPEAKING FROM MOUNT ZION.

1 The God who once to Israel spoke
From Sinai's top, in fire and smoke,
In gentler strains of gospel-grace
Invites us now to seek his face.

2 He wears no terrors on his brow,
He speaks in love from Zion now;
It is the voice of Jesus' blood,
Calling poor wand'rers home to God.

3 The holy Moses quak'd and fear'd,
When Sinai's thund'ring law he heard;
But reigning grace, with accents mild,
Speaks to the sinner as a child.

4 Hark! how from Calvary it sounds,
From the Redeemer's bleeding wounds,
"Pardon and grace I freely give,
Poor sinner, look to me, and live."

5 What other arguments can move
The heart that slights a Saviour's love!
Yet, till almighty power constrain,
This matchless love is preach'd in vain.

6 O Saviour, let thy power be felt,
And cause each stony heart to melt!
Deeply impress upon our youth,
The light and force of gospel-truth.

7 With this new year may they begin
To live to thee, and die to sin;
To enter by the narrow way,
Which leads to everlasting day.

8 How will they else thy presence bear,
When, as a Judge, thou shalt appear!
When slighted love to wrath shall turn,
And the whole earth like Sinai burn!

HYMN XVIII.

A PRAYER FOR POWER ON THE MEANS OF GRACE

1 O thou, at whose almighty word
The glorious light from darkness sprung,
Thy quick'ning influence afford,
And clothe with power the preacher's tongue.

2 Though 'tis thy truth he hopes to speak,
He cannot give the hearing ear;
'Tis thine the stubborn heart to break,
And make the careless sinner fear.

3 As when of old the water flow'd
Forth from the rock at thy command,*
Moses in vain had wav'd his rod,
Without thy wonder-working hand

4 As when the walls of Jericho,†
Down to the earth at once were cast,
It was thy power that brought them low
And not the trumpet's feeble blast.

5 Thus we would in the means be found,
And thus on thee alone depend,
To make the gospel's joyful sound
Effectual to the promis'd end.

6 Now, while we hear thy word of grace,
Let self and pride before it fall;
And rocky hearts dissolve apace,
In streams of sorrow at thy call.

7 On all our youth assembled here,
The unction of thy Spirit pour;
Nor let them lose another year,
Lest thou shouldst strive and call no more

HYMN XIX.

ELIJAH'S MANTLE. 2 KINGS ii. 11—14.

1 Elisha, struck with grief and awe,
Cried, "Ah! where now is Israel's stay?
When he his honour'd master saw
Borne by a fiery car away.

* Exod. xiv, 22. † Numb. xx 11. ‡ Exod. ix

* Numb. xx. 11. † Joshua vi. 20.

2 But while he look'd a last adieu,
His mantle, as it fell, he caught:
The Spirit rested on him too,
And equal miracles he wrought.

3 "Where is Elijah's God?" he cried,
And with the mantle smote the flood;
His word control'd the swelling tide,
The obedient waters upright stood.

4 The wonder-working gospel, thus
From hand to hand has been conveyed;
We have the mantle still with us,
But where, O where, the Spirit's aid?

5 When Peter first his mantle wav'd,*
How soon it melted hearts of steel!
Sinners by thousands then were sav'd,
But now how few its virtues feel?

6 Where is Elijah's God, the Lord,
Thine Israel's hope, and joy, and boast?
Reveal thine arm, confirm thy word,
Give us another Pentecost!

7 Assist thy messenger to speak,
And while he aims to lisp thy truth,
The bonds of sin and Satan break,
And pour thy blessing on our youth.

8 For them we now approach thy throne,
Teach them to know and love thy name;
Then shall thy thankful people own
Elijah's God is still the same.

HYMNS

AFTER SERMONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ON NEW-YEAR EVENINGS, SUITED TO THE SUBJECTS.

HYMN XX.

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON. 1 CHRON. xxviii. 9.

1 O DAVID'S Son, and David's Lord!
From age to age thou art the same;
Thy gracious presence now afford,
And teach our youth to know thy name.

2 Thy people, Lord, though oft distress'd
Upheld by thee, thus far are come;
And now we long to see thy rest,
And wait thy word to call us home.

3 Like David, when this life shall end,
We trust in thee, sure peace to find;
Like him, to thee we now commend
The children we must leave behind.

4 Ere long we hope to be where care,
And sin, and sorrow, never come;
But, oh! accept our humble prayer,
That these may praise thee in our room.

* Acts

5 Shew them how vile they are by sin,
And wash them in thy cleansing blood;
Oh! make them willing to be thine,
And be to them a covenant-God.

6 Long may thy light and truth remain,
To bless this place when we are gone;
And numbers here be born again,
To dwell for ever near thy throne.

HYMN XXI.

THE LORD'S CALL TO HIS CHILDREN. 2 COR. vi. 17. 18.

1 LET us adore the grace that seeks
To draw our hearts above!
Attend, 'tis God the Saviour speaks,
And every word is love.

2 Though, fill'd with awe, before his throne
Each angel veils his face;
He claims a people for his own
Amongst our sinful race.

3 Careless, a while, they live in sin,
Enslav'd to Satan's power;
But they obey the call divine,
In his appointed hour.

4 "Come forth (he says), no more pursue
The paths that lead to death:
Look up, a bleeding Saviour view;
Look, and be sav'd by faith.

5 My sons and daughters you shall be,
Through the atoning blood;
And you shall claim, and find in me,
A Father and a God."

6 Lord, speak these words to ev'ry heart,
By thine all-powerful voice;
That we may now from sin depart,
And make thy love our choice.

7 If now we learn to seek thy face
By Christ the living way,
We'll praise thee for this hour of grace
Through an eternal day.

HYMN XXII.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ. 1 CHRON. iv. 9—10

1 JESUS, who bought us with his blood,
And makes our souls his care,
Was known of old as Israel's God,
And answer'd Jabez' prayer.

2 Jabez! a child of grief! the name
Befits poor sinners well;
For Jesus bore the cross and shame,
To save our souls from hell.

3 Teach us, O Lord, like him to plead
For mercies from above;
O come, and bless our souls indeed
With light, and joy, and love.

4 The gospel's promis d land is wide
We fain would enter in;
But we are press'd on ev'ry side
With unbelief and sin.

5 Arise, O Lord, enlarge our coast,
Let us possess the whole,
That Satan may no longer boast,
He can thy work control.

6 Oh! may thy hand be with us still,
Our guide and guardian be,
To keep us safe from ev'ry ill,
Till death shall set us free.

7 Help us on thee to cast our care,
And on thy word to rest,
That Israel's God, who heareth prayer,
Will grant us our request.

HYMN XXIII.

WAITING AT WISDOM'S GATES. PROV. viii. 34, 35.

1 ENSNAR'D too long my heart has been
In Folly's hurtful ways;
Oh! may I now, at length, begin
To hear what Wisdom says!

2 'Tis Jesus, from the mercy-seat,
Invites me to his rest;
He calls poor sinners to his feet,
To make them truly bless'd.

3 Approach, my soul, to Wisdom's gates,
While it is call'd to-day;
No one who watches there, and waits,
Shall e'er be turn'd away.

4 He will not let me seek in vain,
For all who trust his word
Shall everlasting life obtain,
And favour from the Lord.

5 Lord, I have hated thee too long,
And dar'd thee to thy face;
I've done my soul exceeding wrong
In slighting all thy grace.

6 Now I would break my league with death,
And live to thee alone;
Oh! let thy Spirit's seal of faith
Secure me for thine own.

7 Let all the saints assembled here,
Yea, let all heaven rejoice,
That I begin with this new year
To make the Lord my choice.

HYMN XXIV

ASKING THE WAY TO ZION. JER. l. 5.

1 ZION, the city of our God,
How glorious is the place!
The Saviour there has his abode,
And sinners see his face!

2 Firm against every adverse shock,
Its mighty bulwarks prove;
'Tis built upon the living Rock,
And wall'd around with love.

3 There all the fruits of glory grow,
And joys that never die;
And streams of grace and knowledge flow,
The soul to satisfy.

4 Come, set your faces Zion-ward,
The sacred road inquire;
And let a union to the Lord
Be henceforth your desire.

5 The gospel shines to give you light,
No longer, then, delay;
The Spirit waits to guide you right,
And Jesus is the way.

6 O Lord, regard thy people's prayer,
Thy promise now fulfil;
And young and old by grace prepare
To dwell on Zion's hill.

HYMN XXV.

WE WERE PHARAOH'S BONDMEN. DEUT. vi. 20—23.

1 BENEATH the tyrant Satan's yoke,
Our souls were long oppress'd:
Till grace our galling fetters broke,
And gave the weary rest.

2 Jesus, in that important hour,
His mighty arm made known:
He ransom'd us by price and power,
And claim'd us for his own.

3 Now, freed from bondage, sin, and death,
We walk in wisdom's ways;
And wish to spend our ev'ry breath
In wonder, love, and praise.

4 Ere long, we hope with him to dwell
In yonder world above;
And now we only live to tell
The riches of his love.

5 O might we, ere we hence remove,
Prevail upon our youth
To seek, that they may likewise prove
His mercy and his truth.

6 Like Simeon, we shall gladly go,*
When Jesus calls us home;
If they are left a seed below,
To serve him in our room.

7 Lord, hear our prayer, indulge our hope
On these thy Spirit pour,
That they may take our story up,
When we can speak no more.

* Luke ii. 29.

HYMN XXVI.

TRAVELLING IN BIRTH FOR SOULS. GAL. iv. 19.

1 What contradictions meet
In ministers employ!
It is a bitter sweet,
A sorrow full of joy:
No other post affords a place,
For equal honour or disgrace!

2 Who can describe the pain
Which faithful preachers feel,
Constrain'd to speak in vain,
To hearts as hard as steel!
Or who can tell the pleasures felt,
When stubborn hearts begin to melt!

3 The Saviour's dying love,
The soul's amazing worth,
Their utmost efforts move,
And draw their bowels forth:
They pray, and strive, their rest departs,
Till Christ be form'd in sinners hearts.

4 If some small hope appear,
They still are not content;
But, with a jealous fear,
They watch for the event:
Too oft they find their hopes deceiv'd,
Then how their inmost souls are griev'd!

5 But when their pains succeed
And from the tender blade
The ripening ears proceed,
Their toils are overpaid:
No harvest-joy can equal theirs,
To find the fruit of all their cares.

6 On what has now been sown,
Thy blessing, Lord, bestow;
The power is thine alone,
To make it spring and grow:
Do thou the gracious harvest raise,
And thou alone shalt have the praise.

HYMN XXVII.

WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.
2 COR. v. 20.

1 THY message by the preacher seal,
And let thy power be known,
That every sinner here may feel
The word is not his own.

2 Amongst the foremost of the throng,
Who dare thee to thy face,
He in rebellion stood too long,
And fought against thy grace.

3 But grace prevail'd, he mercy found,
And now by thee is sent,
To tell his fellow rebels round,
And call them to repent.

4 In Jesus God is reconcil'd,
The worst may be forgiv'n;
Come and he'll own you as a child,
And make you heirs of heaven.

5 O may the word of gospel-truth
Your chief desires engage!
And Jesus be your guide in youth,
Your joy in hoary age.

6 Perhaps the year that's now begun
May prove to some their last:
The sands of life may soon be run,
The day of grace be past.

7 Think, if you slight this embassy,
And will not warning take
When Jesus in the clouds you see,
What answer will you make?

HYMN XXVIII.

PAUL'S FAREWELL CHARGE. ACTS xx. 26, 27

1 WHEN Paul was parted from his friends,
It was a weeping day,
But Jesus made them all amends,
And wip'd their tears away.

2 Ere long they met again with joy,
(Secure no more to part),
Where praises every tongue employ,
And pleasure fills each heart.

3 Thus all the preachers of his grace
Their children soon shall meet;
Together see their Saviour's face,
And worship at his feet.

4 But they who heard the word in vain,
Though oft and plainly warn'd,
Will tremble when they meet again
The ministers they scorn'd.

5 On your own heads your blood will fall,
If any perish here;
The preachers who have told you all,
Shall stand approv'd and clear.

6 Yet, Lord, to save themselves alone
Is not their utmost view;
Oh! hear their prayer, thy message own,
And save their hearers too.

HYMN XXIX.

HOW SHALL I PUT THEE AMONG THE CHILDREN? JER. iii. 19.

1 ALAS! by nature how deprav'd,
How prone to ev'ry ill!
Our lives to Satan how enslav'd,
How obstinate our will!

2 And can such sinners be restor'd,
Such rebels reconcil'd?
Can grace itself the means afford,
To make a foe a child?

3 Yes, grace has found the wondrous means,
Which shall effectual prove,
To cleanse us from our countless sins,
And teach our hearts to love.

4 Jesus for sinners undertakes,
And died that we may live;
His blood a full atonement makes,
And cries aloud, "Forgive."

5 Yet one thing more must grace provide,
To bring us home to God,
Or we shall slight the Lord who died,
And trample on his blood.

6 The Holy Spirit must reveal
The Saviour's work and worth;
Then the hard heart begins to feel
A new and heavenly birth.

7 Thus bought with blood, and born again,
Redeem'd and sav'd by grace,
Rebels in God's own house obtain
A son's and daughter's place.

HYMN XXX.

WINTER.*

1 See how rude Winter's icy hand
Has strip'd the trees, and seal'd the ground!
But Spring shall soon his rage withstand,
And spread new beauties all around.

2 My soul a sharper winter mourns,
Barren and fruitless I remain;
When will the gentle spring return,
And bid my graces grow again?

3 Jesus, my glorious Sun, arise!
'Tis thine the frozen heart to move;
Oh! hush these storms, and clear my skies,
And let me feel thy vital love!

4 Dear Lord, regard my feeble cry,
I faint and droop till thou appear;
Wilt thou permit thy plant to die?
Must it be winter all the year?

5 Be still my soul, and wait his hour,
With humble prayer and patient faith;
Till he reveals his gracious power,
Repose on what his promise saith.

6 He, by whose all-commanding word†
Seasons their changing course maintain,
In every change a pledge affords,
That none shall seek his face in vain.

HYMN XXXI.

WAITING FOR SPRING.

1 Though cloudy skies and northern blasts
Retard the gentle spring a while,
The sun will conqueror prove at last,
And nature wear a vernal smile.

2 The promise, which from age to age,
Has brought the changing seasons round,
Again shall calm the winter's rage,
Perfume the air, and paint the ground.

3 The virtue of that first command,
I know still does and will prevail,
That while the earth itself shall stand,
The spring and summer shall not fail.

4 Such changes are for us decreed:
Believers have their winters too;
But spring shall certainly succeed,
And all their former life renew.

5 Winter and spring have each their use,
And each, in turn, his people know;
One kills the weeds their hearts produce,
The other makes their graces grow.

6 Though like dead trees a while they seem,
Yet, having life within their root,
The welcome spring's reviving beam
Draws forth their blossoms, leaves, and fruit.

7 But if the tree indeed be dead,
It feels no change, though spring returns;
Its leafless, naked, barren head,
Proclaims it only fit to burn.

8 Dear Lord, afford our souls a spring,
Thou know'st our winter has been long;
Shine forth, and warm our hearts to sing,
And thy rich grace shall be our song.

HYMN XXXII.

SPRING.

1 Bleak winter is subdu'd at length,
And forc'd to yield the day;
The sun has wasted all his strength,
And driven him away.

2 And now long wish'd for spring is come.
How alter'd is the scene!
The trees and shrubs are dress'd in bloom,
The earth arrayed in green.

3 Where'er we tread, beneath our feet,
The clust'ring flowers spring;
The artless birds, in concert sweet,
Invite our hearts to sing.

4 But, ah! in vain I strive to join,
Oppress'd with sin and doubt;
I feel 'tis winter still within,
Though all is spring without.

5 Oh! would my Saviour from on high
Break through these clouds and shine
No creature then more bless'd than I,
No song more loud than mine.

6 Till then no softly-warbling thrush,
Nor cowslip's sweet perfume,
Nor beauties of each painted bush,
Can dissipate my gloom.

* Book III. Hymn xxxi. † Gen. viii. 22.

7 To Adam, soon as he trangress'd,
Thus Eden bloom'd in vain;
Not paradise could give him rest,
Or soothe his heart-felt pain.

8 Yet here an emblem I perceive
Of what the Lord can do;
Dear Saviour, help me to believe,
That I may flourish too.

9 Thy word can soon my hopes revive,
Can overcome my foes,
And make my languid graces thrive,
And blossom like the rose.

HYMN XXXIII.

ANOTHER.

1 PLEASING spring again is here!
Trees and fields in bloom appear!
Hark! the birds, with artless lays,
Warble their Creator's praise!
Where, in winter, all was snow,
Now the flowers in clusters grow:
And the corn in green array,
Promises a harvest-day.

2 What a change has taken place!
Emblem of the spring of grace;
How the soul, in winter, mourns,
Till the Lord, the Sun, returns;
Till the Spirit's gentle rain
Bids the heart revive again;
Then the stone is turn'd to flesh,
And each grace springs forth afresh.

3 Lord, afford a spring to me!
Let me feel like what I see;
Ah! my winter has been long,
Chill'd my hopes, and stopp'd my song!
Winter threaten'd to destroy
Faith, and love, and every joy;
If thy life was in the root,
Still I could not yield thee fruit.

4 Speak, and by thy gracious voice
Make my drooping soul rejoice;
O, beloved Saviour! haste,
Tell me all the storms are past;
On thy garden deign to smile,
Raise the plants, enrich the soil;
Soon thy presence will restore
Life to what seem'd dead before.

5 Lord, I long to be at home,
Where these changes never come!
Where the saints no winter fear,
Where 'tis spring throughout the year,
How unlike this state below!
There the flowers unwithering blow;
There no chilling blasts annoy;
All is love, and bloom, and joy

HYMN XXXIV.

SUMMER STORMS.*

1 THOUGH the morn may be serene,
Not a threat'ning cloud be seen,
Who can undertake to say,
'Twill be pleasant all the day?
Tempests suddenly may rise,
Darkness overspread the skies,
Lightnings flash, and thunders roar,
E'er a short-liv'd day be o'er.

2 Often thus the child of grace
Enters on his christian race;
Guilt and fear are overborne,
'Tis with him a summer's morn:
While his new-felt joys abound,
All things seem to smile around;
And he hopes it will be fair,
All the day, and all the year.

3 Should we warn him of a change,
He would think the caution strange;
He no change or trouble fears,
Till the gath'ring storm appears;†
Till dark clouds his sun conceal,
Till temptation's power he feel;
Then he trembles and looks pale,
All his hopes and courage fail.

4 But the wonder-working Lord
Soothes the tempest by his word;
Stills the thunder, stops the rain,
And his sun breaks forth again:
Soon the cloud again returns,
Now he joys, and now he mourns;
Oft his sky is overcast,
Ere the day of life be past.

5 Tried believers too can say,
In the course of one short day,
Though the morning has been fair
Prov'd a golden hour of prayer,
Sin and Satan, long ere night,
Have their comforts put to flight:
Ah! what heart-felt peace and joy
Unexpected storms destroy.

6 Dearest Saviour! call us soon
To thine high eternal noon;
Never there shall tempest rise,
To conceal thee from our eyes;
Satan shall no more deceive,
We no more thy Spirit grieve;
But through cloudless, endless days,
Sound, to golden harps, thy praise.

* Book III. Hymn lxviii.
† Book I. Hymn xliv.

HYMN XXXV.

HAY-TIME.

1 The grass and flowers which clothe the field,
And look so green and gay,
Touch'd by the scythe, defenceless yield,
And fall, and fade away.

2 Fit emblem of our mortal state!
Thus, in the scripture-glass,
The young, the strong, the wise, the great,
May see themselves but grass.*

3 Ah! trust not to your fleeting breath,
Nor call your time your own;
Around you see the scythe of death
Is mowing thousands down.

4 And you, who hitherto are spar'd,
Must shortly yield your lives;
Your wisdom is, to be prepar'd
Before the stroke arrives.

5 The grass, when dead, revives no more;
You die to live again;
But oh! if death should prove the door,
To everlasting pain!

6 Lord, help us to obey thy call,
That, from our sins set free,
When, like the grass, our bodies fall,
Our souls may spring to thee.

HYMN XXXVI.

HARVEST.

1 See the corn again in ear!
How the fields and vallies smile!
Harvest now is drawing near,
To repay the farmer's toil:
Gracious Lord secure the crop,
Satisfy the poor with food;
In thy mercy is our hope,
We have sinn'd but thou art good.

2 While I view the plenteous grain
As it ripens on the stalk,
May I not instruction gain,
Helpful to my daily walk?
All this plenty of the field
Was produc'd from foreign seeds,
For the earth itself would yield
Only crops of useless weeds.

3 Though, when newly sown, it lay
Hid a while beneath the ground,
(Some might think it thrown away,)
Yet a large increase is found:
Though conceal'd, it was not lost,
Though it died, it lives again;
Eastern storms and nipping frosts
Have oppos'd its growth in vain.

4 Let the praise be all the Lord's,
As the benefit is ours:
He in season still affords
Kindly heat and gentle showers:
By his care the produce thrives,
Waving o'er the furrow'd lands,
And, when harvest-time arrives,
Ready for the reaper stands.

5 Thus in barren hearts he sows,
Precious seeds of heavenly joy;*
Sin and hell in vain oppose,
None can grace's crop destroy:
Threaten'd oft, yet still it blooms,
After many changes past,
Death, the reaper, when he comes,
Finds it fully ripe at last.

* Isaiah xl. 7.

* Hosea xlv. 7; Mark iv. 26—29

CHRISTMAS.

HYMN XXXVII.

PRAISE FOR THE INCARNATION.

1 Sweeter sounds than music knows,
Charm me in Emmanuel's name;
All her hopes my spirit owes
To his birth, and cross, and shame.

2 When he came the angels sung,
"Glory be to God on high!"
Lord, unloose my stamm'ring tongue,
Who should louder sing than I?

3 Did the Lord a man become
That he might the law fulfil,
Bleed and suffer in my room,
And canst thou, my tongue, be still?

4 No, I must my praises bring,
Though they worthless are and weak;
For, should I refuse to sing,
Sure the very stones would speak.

5 O my Saviour, Shield, and Sun,
Shepherd, Brother, Husband, Friend,
Ev'ry precious name in one,
I will love thee without end.

HYMN XXXVIII.

JEHOVAH-JESUS.

1 My song shall bless the Lord of all,
My praise shall climb to his abode;
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great, supreme, the mighty God.

2 Without beginning or decline,
Object of faith and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence.

3 As much, when in the manger laid,
Almighty ruler of the sky,
As when the six days work he made
Fill'd all the morning-stars with joy.

4 Of all the crowns Jehovah bears,
Salvation is his dearest claim,
That gracious sound well-pleas'd he hears,
And owns Emmanuel for his name.

5 A cheerful confidence I feel,
My well-plac'd hopes with joy I see;
My bosom glows with heavenly zeal,
To worship him who died for me.

6 As man, he pities my complaint,
His power and truth are all divine;
He will not fail, he cannot faint,
Salvation's sure, and must be mine.

C.

HYMN XXXIX.

MAN HONOURED ABOVE ANGELS.

1 Now let us join with hearts and tongues,
And emulate the ange's songs;
Yea, sinners may address their King
In songs that angels cannot sing.

2 They praise the Lamb who once was slain;
But we can add a higher strain,*
Not only say "He suffer'd thus,"
But that "He suffer'd all for us."

3 When angels by transgression fell,
Justice consign'd them all to hell;
But mercy form'd a wonderous plan,
To save and honour fallen man.

4 Jesus, who pass'd the angels by,†
Assum'd our flesh to bleed and die;
And still he makes it his abode,
As man, he fills the throne of God.

5 Our next of kin, our brother now,
Is he to whom the angels bow;
They join with us to praise his name,
But we the nearest interest claim.

6 But ah! how faint our praises rise!
Sure, 'tis the wonder of the skies,
That we, who share his richest love,
So cold and unconcern'd should prove.

7 O glorious hour, it comes with speed,
When we, from sin and darkness freed,
Shall see the God who died for man,
And praise him more than angels can.*

* Rev. v. † Heb. ii. 16.
* Book III. Hymn lxxxviii.

HYMN XL.

SATURDAY EVENING.

1 SAFELY through another week,
God has brought us on our way;
Let us now a blessing seek
On the approaching Sabbath day,
Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest!

2 Mercies multiplied each hour
Through the week our praise demand;
Guarded by almighty power,
Fed and guided by his hand,
Though ungrateful we have been,
Only made returns of sin.

3 While we pray for pard'ning grace,
Through the dear Redeemer's name,
Shew thy reconciled face,
Shine away our sin and shame;
From our worldly care set free,
May we rest this night with thee!

4 When the morn shall bid us rise,
May we feel thy presence near!
May thy glory meet our eyes
When we in thy house appear!
There afford us, Lord, a taste
Of our everlasting feast.

5 May thy gospel's joyful sound
Conquer sinners, comfort saints;
Make the fruits of grace abound,
Bring relief for all complaints;
Thus may all our Sabbaths prove
Till we join the church above!

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

HYMN XLI.

EBENEZER.*

1 THE Lord, our salvation and light,
The guide and the strength of our days,
Has brought us together to-night,
A new Ebenezer to raise:
The year we have now passed through,
His goodness with blessings has crown'd;
Each morning his mercies were new;
Then let our thanksgivings abound.

2 Encompass'd with dangers and snares,
Temptations, and fears, and complaints,
His ear he inclin'd to our prayers,
His hand open'd wide to our wants;

* 1 Sam. vii

We never besought him in vain;
When burden'd with sorrow or sin,
He help'd us again and again,
Or where before now had we been?

3 His gospel, throughout the long year,
From Sabbath to Sabbath he gave;
How oft has he met with us here
And shown himself mighty to save?
His candlestick has been remov'd
From churches once privileg'd thus;
But though we unworthy have prov'd,
It still is continued to us.

4 For so many mercies receiv'd,
Alas! what returns have we made?
His Spirit we often have griev'd,
And evil for good have repaid:
How well it becomes us to cry,
"O, who is a God like to thee
Who passeth iniquities by,
And plungest them deep in the sea!"

5 To Jesus, who sits on the throne,
Our best hallelujahs we bring;
To thee it is owing alone
That we are permitted to sing:
Assist us, we pray, to lament
The sins of the year that is past,
And grant that the next may be spent
Far more to thy praise than the last.

HYMN XLII.

ANOTHER.

LET hearts and tongues unite,
And loud thanksgivings raise;
'Tis duty, mingled with delight
To sing the Saviour's praise.

2 To him we owe our breath,
He took us from the womb,
Which else had shut us up in death,
And prov'd an early tomb.

3 When on the breast we hung
Our help was in the Lord;
'Twas he first taught our infant tongue
To form the lisping word.

4 When in our blood we lay,
He would not let us die,
Because his love had fixed a day
To bring salvation nigh.

5 In childhood and in youth,
His eye was on us still;
Though strangers to his love and truth,
And prone to cross his will.

6 And since his name we knew,
How gracious has he been;
What dangers has he led us through,
What mercies have we seen!

7 Now through another year,
Supported by his care:
We raise our Ebenezer here,
"The Lord has help'd thus far."

8 Our lot in future years
Unable to foresee,
He kindly, to prevent our fears,
Says, "Leave it all to me."

9 Yea, Lord, we wish to cast
Our cares upon thy breast;
Help us to praise thee for the past,
And trust thee for the rest.

II. ORDINANCES.

HYMN XLIII.

ON OPENING A PLACE FOR SOCIAL PRAYER.

1 O LORD, our languid souls inspire
For here we trust thou art:
Send down a coal of heavenly fire,
To warm each waiting heart.

2 Dear Shepherd of thy people, hear,
Thy presence now display;
As thou hast given a place for prayer,
So give us hearts to pray.

3 Shew us some tokens of thy love,
Our fainting hope to raise;
And pour thy blessings from above,
That we may render praise.

4 Within these walls let holy peace,
And love and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience ease
The wounded spirit heal.

5 The feeling heart, the melting eye,
The humbled mind bestow;
And shine upon us from on high,
To make our graces grow

6 May we in faith receive thy word,
In faith present our prayers;
And, in the presence of our Lord,
Unbosom all our cares.

7 And may the gospel's joyful sound,
Enforc'd by mighty grace,
Awaken many sinners round,
To come and fill the place.

HYMN XLIV.

ANOTHER.

1 JESUS, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is hallow'd ground.

2 For thou, within no walls confin'd,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring thee where they come,
And going, take thee to their home.

3 Dear Shepherd of thy chosen few,
Thy former mercies here renew;
Here to our waiting hearts proclaim
The sweetness of thy saving name.

4 Here may we prove the power of prayer
To strengthen faith, and sweeten care;
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all heaven before our eyes.

5 Behold, at thy commanding word,
We stretch the curtain and the cord;*
Come thou, and fill this wider space,
And bless us with a large increase.

6 Lord, we are few, but thou art near;
Nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear:
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts thine own!

C.

HYMN XLV.

THE LORD'S DAY.

1 HOW welcome to the saints, when press'd
With six days noise, and care, and toil,
Is the returning day of rest,
Which hides them from the world a while!

2 Now, from the throng withdrawn away,
They seem to breathe a different air;
Compos'd and soften'd by the day,
All things another aspect wear

3 How happy if their lot is cast,
Where statedly the gospel sounds.
The word is honey to their taste,
Renews their strength, and heals their [wounds.

4 Though pinch'd with poverty at home,
With sharp afflictions daily fed,
It makes amends, if they can come
To God's own house for heavenly bread.

* Isa. liv. 2.

5 With joy they hasten to the place
Where they their Saviour oft have met;
And while they feast upon his grace,
Their burdens and their griefs forget.

6 This favour'd lot, my friends, is ours;
May we the privilege improve,
And find these consecrated hours
Sweet earnests of the joys above!

7 We thank thee for thy day, O Lord;
Here we thy promis'd presence seek;
Open thine hand, with blessings stor'd,
And give us manna for the week.

HYMN XLVI.

GOSPEL-PRIVILEGES.

1 O HAPPY they who know the Lord,
With whom he deigns to dwell!
He feeds and cheers them by his word,
His arm supports them well.

2 To them, in each distressing hour,
His throne of grace is near:
And when they plead his love and power
He stands engag'd to hear.

3 He help'd his saints in ancient days,
Who trusted in his name;
And we can witness to his praise,
His love is still the same.

4 Wand'ring in sin, our souls he found,
And bid us seek his face;
Gave us to hear the gospel-sound,
And taste the gospel-grace.

5 Oft in his house his glory shines,
Before our wond'ring eyes;
We wish not then for golden mines,
Or aught beneath the skies.

6 His presence sweetens all our cares,
And makes our burdens light;
A word from him dispels our fears,
And gilds the gloom of night.

7 Lord, we expect to suffer here,
Nor would we dare repine;
But give us still to find thee near,
And own us still for thine.

8 Let us enjoy and highly prize
These tokens of thy love,
Till thou shalt bid our spirits rise
To worship thee above.

HYMN XLVII

ANOTHER.

1 HAPPY are they to whom the Lord
His gracious name makes known;
And by his Spirit, and his word,
Adopts them for his own

2 He calls them to his mercy-seat,
And hears their humble prayer;
And when within his house they meet,
They find his presence near.

3 The force of their united cries
No power can long withstand;
For Jesus helps them from the skies,
By his almighty hand.

4 Then mountains sink at once to plains,
And light from darkness springs
Each seeming loss improves their gains,
Each trouble comfort brings.

5 Though men despise them, or revile,
They count the trial small;
Whoever frowns, if Jesus smile,
It makes amends for all.

6 Though meanly clad, and coarsely fed,
And, like their Saviour, poor,
They would not change their gospel-bread
For all the worldling's store.

7 When cheer'd with faith's sublimer joys,
They mount on eagles' wings,
They can disdain, as children's toys,
The pride and pomp of kings.

8 Dear Lord, assist our souls to pay
The debt of praise we owe,
That we enjoy a gospel day,
And heaven begun below.

HYMN XLVIII.

PRAISE FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF THE GOSPEL *

1 ONCE, while we aim'd at Zion's songs,
A sudden mourning check'd our tongues!
Then we were call'd to sow in tears,
The seeds of joy for future years.

2 Oft as that memorable hour
The changing year brings round again,
We meet to praise the love and power
Which heard our cries and eased our pain.

3 Come, ye who trembled for the ark,
Unite in praise for answer'd prayer!
Did not the Lord our sorrows mark?
Did not our sighing reach his ear?

4 Then smaller griefs were laid aside,
And all our cares summ'd up in one:
"Let us but have thy word," we cried,
"In other things thy will be done."

5 Since he has granted our request,
And we still hear the gospel-voice,
Although by many trials prest,
In this we can and will rejoice.

6 Though to our lot temptations fall,
Though pain, and want, and cares annoy,
The precious gospel sweetens all,
And yields us med'cine, food, and joy.

* Wherever a separation is threatened between a minister and people who dearly love each other, this Hymn may be as seasonable as it was once in Olney.

HYMN XLIX.

A FAMINE OF THE WORD.

1 GLADNESS was spread through Israel's host
When first they manna viewed;
They labour'd who should gather most,
And thought it pleasant food.

2 But when they had it long enjoyed,
From day to day the same.
Their hearts were by the plenty cloyed,
Although from heaven it came.

3 Thus gospel-bread at first is priz'd,
And makes a people glad;
But afterwards too much despis'd
When easy to be had.

4 But should the Lord, displeas'd, with-hold
The bread his mercy sends,
To have our houses fill'd with gold
Would make but poor amends.

5 How tedious would the week appear,
How dull the Sabbath prove,
Could we no longer meet to hear
The precious truths we love!

6 How would believing parents bear,
To leave their heedless youth
Expos'd to every fatal snare,
Without the light of truth!

7 The gospel, and a praying few,
Our bulwark long have prov'd;
But Olney sure the day will rue
When these shall be remov'd.

8 Then sin, in this once-favour'd town,
Will triumph unrestrain'd;
And wrath and vengeance hasten down
No more by prayer detain'd.

9 Preserve us from this judgment, Lord,
For Jesus' sake we plead;
A famine of the gospel-word
Would be a stroke indeed!

HYMN L.

PRAYER FOR MINISTERS.

1 CHIEF Shepherd of thy chosen sheep,
From death and sin set free!
May ev'ry under-shepherd keep
His eye intent on thee!

2 With plenteous grace their hearts prepare
To execute thy will;
Compassion, patience, love, and care,
And faithfulness, and skill.

3 Inflame their minds with holy zeal,
Their flocks to feed and teach;
And let them live, and let them feel
The sacred truths they preach.

Oh! never let the sheep complain
That toys, which fools amuse,
Ambition, pleasure, praise, or gain,
Debase the shepherd's views.

5 He that for these forbears to feed
The souls whom Jesus loves,
Whate'er he may profess or plead,
An idol shepherd proves.*

6 The sword of God shall break his arm,
A blast shall blind his eye;
His word shall have no power to warm,
His gifts shall all grow dry.

7 O Lord, avert this heavy woe,
Let all thy shepherds say!
And grace, and strength, on each bestow,
To labour while 'tis day.

HYMN LI.

PRAYER FOR A REVIVAL.

1 SAVIOUR, visit thy plantation,
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,
Unless thou return again:
Keep no longer at a distance,
Shine upon us from on high;
Lest, for want of thine assistance,
Ev ry plant should droop and die.

2 Surely once thy garden flourish'd,
Ev'ry part look'd gay and green:
Then thy word our spirits nourish'd,
Happy seasons we have seen.
But a drought has since succeeded,
And a sad decline we see;
Lord, thy help is greatly needed;
Help can only come from thee.

3 Where are those we counted leaders,
Fill'd with zeal, and love, and truth?
Old professors, tall as cedars,
Bright examples to our youth!
Some, in whom we once delighted,
We shall meet no more below;
Some, alas! we fear are blighted,
Scarce a single leaf they show.

4 Younger plants—the sight how pleasant—
Cover'd thick with blossoms stood;
But they cause us grief at present,
Frosts have nipp'd them in the bud!
Dearest Saviour, hasten thither,
Thou canst make them bloom again;
Oh! permit them not to wither,
Let not all our hopes be vain!

5 Let our mutual love be fervent,
Makes us prevalent in prayers:
Let each one esteem'd thy servant
Shun the world's bewitching snares:
Break the tempter's fatal power
Turn the stony heart to flesh;
And begin from this good hour,
To revive thy work afresh.

* Zech xi. 17

HYMN LII.

HOPING FOR A REVIVAL.

1 MY harp untun'd and laid aside,
(To cheerful hours the harp belongs)
My cruel foes insulting cried,
"Come, sing us one of Zion's songs."

2 Alas! when sinners, blindly bold,
At Zion scoff, and Zion's King;
When zeal declines, and love grows cold,
Is this a day for me to sing?

3 Time was, whene'er the saints I met,
With joy and praise my bosom glow'd;
But now, like Eli, sad I sit,
And tremble for the ark of God.

4 While thus to grief my soul gave way,
To see the work of God decline;
Methought I heard my Saviour say,
"Dismiss thy fears, the ark is mine.

5 Though for a time I hide my face,
Rely upon my love and power;
Still wrestle at a throne of grace,
And wait for a reviving hour.

6 Take down thy long-neglected harp,
I've seen thy tears, and heard thy prayer
The winter-season has been sharp,
But spring shall all its wastes repair."

7 Lord, I obey; my hopes revive;
Come, join with me, ye saints, and sing
Our foes in vain against us strive,
For God will help and healing bring.

SACRAMENTAL HYMNS.

HYMN LIII.

WELCOME TO THE TABLE.

1 THIS is the feast of heavenly wine,
And God invites to sup;
The juices of the living vine
Were press'd, to fill the cup.

2 Oh! bless the Saviour, ye that eat,
With royal dainties fed;
Not heaven affords a costlier treat,
For Jesus is the bread.

3 The vile, the lost, he calls to them,
Ye trembling souls, appear!
The righteous in their own esteem
Have no acceptance here.

4 Approach, ye poor, nor dare refuse
The banquet spread for you;
Dear Saviour, this is welcome news,
Then I may venture too.

5 If guilt and sin afford a plea,
And may obtain a place,
Surely the Lord will welcome me,
And I shall see his face.

C.

HYMN LIV.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

1 When on the cross my Lord I see,
Bleeding to death for wretched me,
Satan and sin no more can move,
For I am all transform'd to love.

2 His thorns and nails pierce thro' my heart,
In every groan I bear a part;
I view his wounds with streaming eyes;
But, see! he bows his head, and dies!

3 Come, sinners, view the Lamb of God,
Wounded, and dead, and bath'd in blood!
Behold his side, and venture near,
The well of endless life is here.

4 Here I forget my cares and pains;
I drink, yet still my thirst remains;
Only the fountain-head above
Can satisfy the thirst of love.

5 O that I thus could always feel!
Lord, more and more thy love reveal!
Then my glad tongue shall loud proclaim
The grace and glory of thy name.

6 Thy name dispels my guilt and fear,
Revives my heart and charms my ear:
Affords a balm for ev'ry wound,
And Satan trembles at the sound.

HYMN LV.

JESUS HASTING TO SUFFER.

1 The Saviour, what a noble flame
Was kindled in his breast,
When, hasting to Jerusalem,
He march'd before the rest!

2 Good-will to men, and zeal for God,
His ev'ry thought engross;
He longs to be baptiz'd with blood,*
He pants to reach the cross.

3 With all his sufferings full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the task his spirit flew,
'Twas love that urg'd him on.

4 Lord, we return thee what we can;
Our hearts shall sound abroad,
Salvation to the dying man,
And to the rising God!

* Luke xii. 50.

5 And while thy bleeding glories here,
Engage our wond'ring eyes,
We learn our lighter cross to bear,
And hasten to the skies.

C.

HYMN LVI.

IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE.

1 Let me dwell on Golgotha,
Weep and love my life away:
While I see him on the tree,
Weep, and bleed, and die for me.

2 That dear blood, for sinners spilt,
Shews my sin in all its guilt:
Ah! my soul, he bore thy load;
Thou hast slain the Lamb of God.

3 Hark! his dying word, "Forgive,
Father, let the sinner live;
Sinner, wipe thy tears away,
I thy ransom freely pay."

4 While I hear this grace reveal'd,
And obtain a pardon seal'd,
All my soft affections move,
Weaken'd by the force of love.

5 Farewell, world! thy gold is dross,
Now I see the bleeding cross;
Jesus died to set me free
From the law, and sin, and thee!

6 He has dearly bought my soul;
Lord, accept, and claim the whole!
To thy will I all resign,
Now no more my own, but thine.

HYMN LVII.

LOOKING AT THE CROSS.

1 In evil long I took delight,
Unaw'd by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career.

2 I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me
As near his cross I stood.

3 Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

4 My conscience felt, and own'd the guilt,
And plung'd me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail him there.

5 Alas! I knew not what I did;
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid.
For I the Lord have slain.

6 Another look he gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die, that thou may'st live."

7 Thus, while his death my sin displays,
In all its blackest hue,
(Such is the mystery of grace),
It seals my pardon too.

8 With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,
My spirit now is fill'd,
That I should such a life destroy
Yet live by him I kill'd.

HYMN LVIII.

SUPPLIES IN THE WILDERNESS.

1 WHEN Israel, by divine command,
The pathless desert trod,
They found, though 'twas a barren land,
A sure resource in God.

2 A cloudy pillar mark'd their road,
And screen'd them from the heat;
From the hard rocks the water flow'd,
And manna was their meat.

3 Like them, we have a rest in view,
Secure from adverse powers;
Like them, we pass a desert too;
But Israel's God is ours.

4 Yes, in this barren wilderness,
He is to us the same,
By his appointed means of grace,
As once he was to them.

5 His word a light before us spreads,
By which our path we see;
His love a banner o'er our heads,
From harm preserves us free.

6 Jesus, the bread of life, is given
To be our daily food:
We drink a wond'rous stream from heaven,
'Tis water, wine, and blood.

7 Lord, 'tis enough, I ask no more,
These blessings are divine;
I envy not the worldling's store,
If Christ and heaven are mine.

HYMN LIX.

COMMUNION WITH THE SAINTS IN GLORY.

1 REFRESHED by the bread and wine,
The pledges of our Saviour's love:
Now let our hearts and voices join
In songs of praise with those above.

2 Do they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb?"
Although we cannot reach their strains,
Yet we, through grace, can sing the same,
For us he died, for us he reigns.

3 If they behold him face to face,
While we a glimpse can only see;
Yet equal debtors to his grace,
As safe and as belov'd are we.

4 They had, like us, a suffering time,
Our cares, and fears, and griefs they knew;
But they have conquer'd all through him,
And we ere long shall conquer too.

5 Though all the songs of saints in light
Are far beneath his matchless worth,
His grace is such, he will not slight
The poor attempts of worms on earth

ON PRAYER

HYMN LX.

EXHORTATION TO PRAYER.

1 WHAT various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy-seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there.

2 Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings ev'ry blessing from above.

3 Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

4 While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;*
But when through weariness they fail'd,
That moment Amalek prevail'd.

5 Have you no words? ah! think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear,
With the sad tale of all your care.

6 Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oft'ner be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me."

C.

HYMN LXI.

POWER OF PRAYER.

1 IN themselves, as weak as worms,
How can poor believers stand,
When temptations, foes, and storms,
Press them close on ev'ry hand?

* Exod. xvii. 11.

2 Weak, indeed, they feel they are,
But they know the throne of grace;
And the God who answers prayer,
Helps them when they seek his face.

3 Though the Lord a while delay,
Succour they at length obtain;
He who taught their hearts to pray,
Will not let them cry in vain.

4 Wrestling prayer can wonders do,
Bring relief in deepest straits;
Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates.

5 Hezekiah on his knees
Proud Assyria's host subdued;
And when smitten with disease,
Had his life by prayer renewed.

6 Peter, though confin'd and chain'd,
Prayer prevail'd and brought him out:
When Elijah prayed, it rain'd,
After three long years of drought

7 We can likewise witness bear,
That the Lord is still the same;
Though we fear'd he would not hear,
Suddenly deliverance came.

8 For the wonders he has wrought,
Let us now our praises give;
And by sweet experience taught,
Call upon him while we live.

ON THE SCRIPTURES.

HYMN LXII.

THE LIGHT AND GLORY OF THE WORD.

1 The Spirit breathes upon the word,
And brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford
A sanctifying light.

2 A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.

3 The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise,
They rise, but never set.

4 Let everlasting thanks be thine,
For such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heavenly day,

5 My soul rejoices to pursue
The steps of him I love;
Till glory breaks upon my view
In brighter worlds above.

C.

HYMN LXIII.

THE WORD MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD

1 Precious Bible! what a treasure
Does the word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword:
Let the world account me poor,
Having this I need no more.

2 Food to which the world's a stranger,
Here my hungry soul enjoys;
Of excess there is no danger,
Though it fills, it never cloys:
On a dying Christ I feed,
He is meat and drink indeed!

3 When my faith is faint and sickly,
Or when Satan wounds my mind,
Cordials to revive me quickly,
Healing med'cines here I find:
To the promises I flee,
Each affords a remedy.

4 In the hour of dark temptation,
Satan cannot make me yield;
For the word of consolation
Is to me a mighty shield:
While the scripture truths are sure,
From his malice I'm secure.

5 Vain his threats to overcome me,
When I take the Spirit's sword;
Then, with ease, I drive him from me,
Satan trembles at the word:
'Tis a sword for conquest made,
Keen the edge, and strong the blade

6 Shall I envy, then, the miser,
Doating on his golden store?
Sure I am, or should be, wiser;
I am rich 'tis he is poor:
Jesus gives me in his word,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword

III. PROVIDENCES.

HYMN LXIV.

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES IN AMERICA.

1 THE gath'ring clouds, with aspect dark
A rising storm presage;
Oh! to be hid within the ark,
And shelter'd from its rage.

2 See the commission'd angel frown! *
That vial in his hand,
Fill'd with fierce wrath, is pouring down
Upon our guilty land!

3 Ye saints, unite in wrestling prayer,
If yet there may be hope;
Who knows but mercy yet may spare,
And bid the angel stop? †

4 Already is the plague begun, ‡
And fired with hostile rage,
Brethren, by blood and interest one,
With brethren now engage.

5 Peace spreads her wings, prepar'd for flight,
And war, with flaming sword,
And hasty strides, draws nigh to fight
The battles of the Lord.

6 The first alarm, alas! how few,
While distant, seem to hear!
But they will hear, and tremble too,
When God shall send it near.

7 So thunder o'er the distant hills
Gives but a murm'ring sound;
But as the tempest spreads, it fills,
And shakes the welkin § round.

8 May we at least, with one consent,
Fall low before the throne;
With tears the nation's sins lament,
The church's and our own.

9 The humble souls who mourn and pray,
The Lord approves and knows;
His mark secures them in the day
When vengeance strikes his foes.

FAST-DAY HYMNS.

HYMN LXV.

CONFESSION AND PRAYER. Dec. 13, 1776.

1 OH! may the power which melts the rock,
Be felt by all assembled here!
Or else our service will but mock
The God whom we profess to fear!

2 Lord, while thy judgments shake the land
Thy people's eyes are fixed on thee!
We own thy just uplifted hand,
Which thousands cannot, will not see.

3 How long hast thou bestow'd thy care
On this indulg'd ungrateful spot;
While other nations, far and near,
Have envied and admir'd our lot.

4 Here peace and liberty have dwelt,
The glorious gospel brightly shone;
And oft our enemies have felt
That God has made our cause his own.

5 But, ah! both heaven and earth have heard
Our vile requittal of his love!
We, whom like children he has rear'd,
Rebels against his goodness prove. *

6 His grace despis'd, his power defied
And legions of the blackest crimes,
Profaneness, riot, lust, and pride,
Are signs that mark the present times.

7 The Lord, displeas'd, has rais'd his rod;
Ah, where are now the faithful few,
Who tremble for the ark of God,
And know what Israel ought to do? †

8 Lord, hear thy people ev'rywhere,
Who meet to mourn, confess, and pray;
The nation and thy churches spare,
And let thy wrath be turn'd away.

HYMN LXVI.

MOSES AND AMALEK. ‡ Feb. 27, 1778.

1 WHILE Joshua led the armed bands
Of Israel forth to war;
Moses apart, with lifted hands,
Engag'd in humble prayer.

2 The armed bands had quickly fail'd,
And perish'd in the fight,
If Moses' prayer had not prevail'd
To put the foes to flight.

3 When Moses' hands through weakness dropp'd,
The warriors fainted too;
Israel's success at once was stopp'd,
And Am'lek bolder grew.

4 A people, always prone to boast,
Were taught by this suspense,
That not a num'rous armed host,
But God, was their defence.

* Rev. xvi. 1. † 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. ‡ Numb. xvi. 46. § Firmament or atmosphere.

Isaiah i. 2. † 1 Chron. xii. 32. ‡ Exod. xvii.

5 We now of fleets and armies vaunt,
And ships and men prepare;
But men like Moses most we want
To save the state by prayer.

6 Yet, Lord, we hope thou hast prepar'd
A hidden few to-day
(The nation's secret strength and guard)
To weep, and mourn, and pray.

7 O hear their prayers, and grant us aid!
Bid war and discord cease;
Heal the sad breach which sin has made,
And bless us all with peace.

HYMN LXVII.

THE HIDING-PLACE. Feb. 10, 1779.

1 See the gloomy gath'ring cloud
Hanging o'er a sinful land!
Sure the Lord proclaims aloud
Times of trouble are at hand.
Happy they who love his name;
They shall always find him near;
Though the earth were wrapt in flame,
They have no just cause for fear.

2 Hark, his voice in accents mild,
(O how comforting and sweet!)
Speaks to every humble child,
Pointing out a sure retreat!
"Come, and in my chambers hide,*
To my saints of old well known;
There you safely may abide,
Till the storm be overblown.

3 You have only to repose
On my wisdom, love, and care;
When my wrath consumes my foes,
Mercy shall my children spare:
While they perish in the flood,
You that bear my holy mark,†
Sprinkled with atoning blood,
Shall be safe within the ark."

4 Sinners, see the ark prepar'd!
Haste to enter while there's room;
Though the Lord his arm has bar'd
Mercy still retards your doom:
Seek him while there yet is hope,
Ere the day of grace be past,
Lest in wrath he give you up,
And this call should prove your last.

HYMN LXVIII.

ON THE EARTHQUAKE. Sept. 8, 1775.

1 Although on massy pillars built,
The earth has lately shook;
It trembles under Britain's guilt,
Before its Maker's look.

2 Swift as the shock amasement spreads,
And sinners tremble too;
What flight can screen their guilty heads,
If earth itself pursue?

3 But mercy spar'd us while it warn'd,
The shock is felt no more;
And mercy now, alas! is scorn'd
By sinners, as before.

4 But if these warnings prove in vain,
Say, sinner, canst thou tell,
How soon the earth may quake again,
And open wide to hell?

5 Repent before the Judge draws nigh,
Or else when he comes down,
Thou wilt in vain for earthquakes cry
To hide thee from his frown.*

6 But happy they who love the Lord,
And his salvation know;
The hope that's founded on his word,
No change can overthrow.

7 Should the deep-rooted hills be hurl'd,
And plung'd beneath the seas,
And strong convulsions shake the world,
Your hearts may rest in peace.

8 Jesus, your Shepherd, Lord, and Chief,
Shall shelter you from ill;
And not a worm or shaking leaf
Can move, but at his will.

HYMN LXIX.

ON THE FIRE AT OLNEY. Sept. 22, 1777

1 Wearied by day with toils and cares,
How welcome is the peaceful night!
Sweet sleep our wasted strength repairs,
And fits us for returning light.

2 Yet when our eyes in sleep are clos'd,
Our rest may break ere well begun;
To dangers ev'ry hour expos'd,
We neither can forsee nor shun.

3 'Tis of the Lord that we can sleep
A single night without alarms;
His eye alone our lives can keep
Secure amidst a thousand harms.

4 For months and years of safety past,
Ungrateful we, alas! have been;
Though patient long, he spoke at last,
And bid the fire rebuke our sin.

5 The shout of—Fire! a dreadful cry,
Impress'd each heart with deep dismay,
While the fierce blaze and redd'ning sky
Made midnight wear the face of day.

6 The throng and terror who can speak?
The various sounds that fill'd the air—
The infant's wail, the mother's shriek,
The voice of blasphemy and prayer.

* Isaiah xxvi. 20. † Ezek. ix. 4

* Rev. vi. 16.

7 But prayer prevail'd and sav'd the town:
The few who lov'd the Saviour's name
Were heard, and mercy hasted down
To change the wind and stop the flame.

8 O may that night be ne'er forgot!
Lord, still increase thy praying few!
Were Olney left without a Lot,
Ruin like Sodom's would ensue.

HYMN LXX.

A WELCOME TO CHRISTIAN FRIENDS.

1 KINDRED in Christ, for his dear sake,
A hearty welcome here receive;
May we together now partake
The joys which only he can give!

2 To you and us by grace 'tis given
To know the Saviour's precious name,
And shortly we shall meet in heaven,
Our hope, our way, our end the same.

3 May he, by whose kind care we meet,
Send his good Spirit from above,
Make our communications sweet,
And cause our hearts to burn with love!

4 Forgotten be each worldly theme,
When christians see each other thus;
We only wish to speak of him
Who liv'd, and died, and reigns for us.

5 We'll talk of all he did and said,
And suffer'd for us here below;
The path he mark'd for us to tread,
And what he's doing for us now.

6 Thus, as the moments pass away,
We'll love, and wonder, and adore,
And hasten on the glorious day,
When we shall meet to part no more.

HYMN LXXI.

AT PARTING.

1 As the sun's enliv'ning eye
Shines on ev'ry place the same;
So the Lord is always nigh
To the souls that love his name.

2 When they move at duty's call,
He is with them by the way:
He is ever with them all,
Those who go and those who stay.

3 From his holy mercy-seat
Nothing can their souls confine;
Still in spirit they may meet,
And in sweet communion join.

4 For a season call'd to part,
Let us then ourselves commend
To the gracious eye and heart
Of our ever-present Friend.

5 Jesus, hear our humble prayer!
Tender Shepherd of thy sheep!
Let thy mercy and thy care
All our souls in safety keep.

6 In thy strength may we be strong,
Sweeten ev'ry cross and pain;
Give us, if we live, ere long,
Here to meet in peace again.

7 Then, if thou thy help afford,
Ebenezers shall be rear'd,
And our souls shall praise the Lord,
Who our poor petitions heard.

FUNERAL HYMNS.

HYMN LXXII.

ON THE DEATH OF A BELIEVER.

1 IN vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saints
When yielding up their breath.

2 One gentle sigh their fetters breaks;
We scarce can say, "They're gone!"
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.

3 Faith strives, but all its efforts fail,
To trace her in her flight;
No eyes can pierce within the vail,
Which hides that world of light.

4 Thus much (and this is all) we know,
They are completely blest,
Have done with sin, and care, and woe
And with their Saviour rest.

5 On harps of gold they praise his name,
His face they always view;
Then let us follow'rs be of them
That we may praise him too.

6 Their faith and patience, love and zeal
Should make their mem'ry dear;
And, Lord, do thou the prayers fulfil
They offer'd for us here!

7 While they have gain'd, we losers are
We miss them day by day;
But thou canst ev'ry breach repair,
And wipe our tears away.

8 We pray, as in Elisha's case,
When great Elijah went,
May double portions of thy grace
To us who stay be sent.

HYMN LXXIII.

ON THE DEATH OF A MINISTER.

1 His master taken from his head,
Elisha saw him go,
And, in desponding accents said,
"Ah! what must Israel do?"

2 But he forgot the Lord who lifts
The beggar to the throne,
Nor knew that all Elijah's gifts
Would soon be made his own.

3 What! when a Paul has run his course,
Or when Apollos dies,
Is Israel left without resource?
And have we no supplies?

4 Yes! while the dear Redeemer lives,
We have a boundless store,
And shall be fed with what he gives,
Who lives for evermore.

C.

HYMN LXXIV.

THE TOLLING BELL.

1 Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,
Speaks the departure of a soul,
Let each one ask himself "Am I
Prepar'd should I be call'd to die?'

2 Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death:
Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,
And plung'd into a world unknown.

3 Then leaving all I lov'd below,
To God's tribunal I must go;
Must hear the Judge pronounce my fate,
And fix my everlasting state.

4 But could I bear to hear him say,
"Depart, accursed, far away!
With Satan in the lowest hell,
Thou art for ever doom'd to dwell."

5 Lord Jesus! help me now to flee,
And seek my hope alone in thee;
Apply thy blood, thy Spirit give,
Subdue my sin, and let me live.

6 Then, when the solemn bell I hear,
If sav'd from guilt, I need not fear;
Nor would the thought distressing be,
Perhaps it next may toll for me.

7 Rather my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish to hear thy voice,
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if thou art mine.

HYMN LXXV

HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE.

1 My soul, this curious house of clay,
Thy present frail abode,
Must quickly fall to worms a prey,
And thou return to God.

2 Canst thou, by faith, survey with joy
The change before it come?
And say, "Let death this house destroy
I have a heavenly home!

3 The Saviour, whom I then shall see
With new-admiring eyes,
Already has prepar'd for me
A mansion in the skies." *

4 I feel this mud-wall'd cottage shake,
And long to see it fall;
That I my willing flight may take
To him who is my all.

5 Burden'd and groaning then no more,
My rescu'd soul shall sing,
As up the shining path I soar,
"Death thou hast lost thy sting.'

6 Dear Saviour help us now to seek
And know thy grace's power,
That we may all this language speak,
Before the dying hour.

HYMN LXXVI.

THERE THE WEARY ARE AT REST.

1 Courage, my soul! behold the prize
The Saviour's love provides,—
Eternal life beyond the skies
For all whom here he guides.

2 The wicked cease from troubling there,
The weary are at rest;†
Sorrow, and sin, and pain, and care,
No more approach the blest.

3 A wicked world, and wicked heart,
With Satan now are join'd;
Each acts a too successful part
In harrassing my mind.

4 In conflict with this threefold troop,
How weary, Lord, am I!
Did not thy promise bear me up,
My soul must faint and die.

5 But fighting in my Saviour's strength,
Though mighty are my foes,
I shall a conq'ror be at length
O'er all that can oppose.

6 Then why, my soul, complain or fear?
The crown of glory see!
The more I toil and suffer here,
The sweeter rest will be.

* 2 Cor. v. 1. † Job iii. 17.

HYMN LXXVII.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

1 DAY of judgment, day of wonders!
Hark! the trumpet's awful sound,
Louder than a thousand thunders,
Shakes the vast creation round! [confound!
How the summons will the sinner's heart

2 See the Judge our nature wearing,
Cloth'd in majesty divine!
You who long for his appearing,
Then shall say, This God is mine! [thine!
Gracious Saviour, own me in that day for

3 At his call the dead awaken,
Rise to life from earth and sea:
All the powers of nature shaken,
By his looks prepare to flee; [thee!
Careless sinner! what will then become of

4 Horrors past imagination
Will surprise your trembling heart,
When you hear your condemnation,
"Hence, accursed wretch, depart!
Thou with Satan and his angels have thy part!"

5 Satan, who now tries to please you,
Lest you timely warning take,
When that word is past, will seize you,
Plunge you in the burning lake:
Think, poor sinner, thy eternal all's at stake.

6 But to those who have confessed,
Lov'd and serv'd the Lord below,
He will say, "Come near, ye blessed,
See the kingdom I bestow:
You for ever shall my love and glory know."

7 Under sorrows and reproaches,
May this thought your courage raise!
Swiftly God's great day approaches,
Sighs shall then be chang'd to praise:
We shall triumph when the world is in a blaze.

HYMN LXXVIII.

THE DAY OF THE LORD. *

1 GOD, with one piercing glance, looks thro'
Creation's wide extended frame;
The past and future in his view,
And days and ages are the same.†

2 Sinners who dare provoke his face,
Who on his patience long presume,
And trifle out his day of grace,
Will find he has a day of doom.

3 As pangs the lab'ring woman feels,
Or as the thief, in midnight sleep;
So comes that day, for which the wheels
Of time their ceaseless motion keep!

4 Hark! from the sky the trump proclaims
Jesus the Judge approaching nigh!
See, the creation wrapt in flames,
First kindled by his vengeful eye!

5 When thus the mountains melt like wax;
When earth, and air, and sea, shall burn;
When all the frame of nature breaks,
Poor sinner, whether wilt thou turn?

6 The puny works which feeble men
Now boast, or covet, or admire;
Their pomp and arts, and treasures, then
Shall perish in one common fire.

7 Lord, fix our hearts and hopes above!
Since all below to ruin tends;
Here may we trust, obey, and love,
And there be found amongst thy friends.

HYMN LXXIX.

THE GREAT TRIBUNAL. *

1 JOHN, in vision, saw the day
When the Judge will hasten down,
Heaven and earth shall flee away
From the terror of his frown;
Dead and living, small and great,
Raised from the earth and sea,
At his bar shall hear their fate,—
What will then become of me?

2 Can I bear his awful looks?
Shall I stand in judgment then,
When I see the open'd books,
Written by the Almighty's pen?
If he to remembrance bring,
And expose to public view,
Ev'ry work and secret thing,
Ah! my soul, what canst thou do?

3 When the list shall be produc'd
Of the talents I enjoyed;
Means and mercies, how abus'd!
Time and strength, how misemployed!
Conscience then, compell'd to read,
Must allow the charge is true;
Say, my soul, what canst thou plead?
In that hour, what wilt thou do?

4 But the book of life I see,
May my name be written there!
Then from guilt and danger free,
Glad I'll meet him in the air:
That's the book I hope to plead,
'Tis the gospel open'd wide;
Lord, I am a wretch indeed!
I have sinn'd, but thou hast died. †

* Book III. Hymn iv. † 2 Pet. iii. 8—10.

* Rev. xx. 11. 12. † Rom. viii. 34

5 Now my soul knows what to do;
Thus I shall with boldness stand,
Number'd with the faithful few,
Own'd and sav'd at thy right-hand:
If thou help a feeble worm
To believe thy promise now,
Justice will at last confirm
What thy mercy wrought below.

IV. CREATION.

HYMN LXXX.

THE OLD AND NEW CREATION.

1 THAT was a wonder-working word
Which could the vast creation raise!
Angels, attendant on their Lord,*
Admir'd the plan, and sung his praise.

2 From what a dark and shapeless mass,
All nature sprung at his command!
Let there be light, and light there was,
And sun, and stars, and sea, and land.

3 With equal speed the earth and seas
Their mighty Maker's voice obeyed;
He spake, and straight the plants and trees,
And birds, and beasts, and men were made.

4 But man, the lord and crown of all,
By sin his honour soon defac'd;
His heart (how alter'd since the fall!)
Is dark, deform'd, and void, and waste.

5 The new creation of the soul
Does now no less his power display,†
Than when he form'd the mighty whole,
And kindled darkness into day.

6 Though, self-destroyed, O Lord, we are,
Yet let us feel what thou canst do;
Thy word the ruin can repair,
And all our hearts create anew

HYMN LXXXI.

THE BOOK OF CREATION.

1 THE book of nature open lies,
With much instruction stor'd;
But till the Lord anoints our eyes,
We cannot read a word.

2 Philosophers have por'd in vain,
And guess'd from age to age:
For reason's eye could ne'er attain
To understand a page.

3 Though to each star they give a name,
Its size and motions teach;
The truths which all the stars proclaim,
Their wisdom cannot reach.

4 With skill to measure earth and sea,
And weigh the subtile air;
They cannot, Lord, discover thee,
Though present ev'rywhere.

5 The knowledge of the saints excels
The wisdom of the schools;
To them his secrets God reveals,
Though men account them fools.

6 To them the sun and stars on high,
The flowers that paint the field,*
And all the artless birds that fly,
Divine instruction yield.

7 The creatures on their senses press,
As witnesses to prove
Their Saviour's power and faithfulness,
His providence and love.

8 Thus may we study nature's book,
To make us wise indeed!
And pity those who only look
At what they cannot read.†

HYMN LXXXII.

THE RAINBOW.

1 WHEN the sun, with cheerful beams,
Smiles upon a low'ring sky,
Soon its aspect soften'd seems,
And a rainbow meets the eye:
While the sky remains serene,
This bright arch is never seen.

2 Thus the Lord's supporting power
Brightest to his saints appears,
When affliction's threat'ning hour
Fills the sky with clouds and fears,
He can wonders then perform,
Paint a rainbow on the storm.‡

* Job xxxviii. 7. † 2 Cor. iv. 6.

* Matth. vi. 26—28. † Rom. i. 20
‡ Gen. ix. 14.

3 All their graces doubly shine,
When their troubles press them sore;
And the promises divine
Give them joys unknown before:
As the colours of the bow
To the cloud their brightness owe.

4 Favour'd John a rainbow saw,*
Circling round the throne above;
Hence the saints a pledge may draw
Of unchanging cov'nant love:
Clouds a while may intervene,
But the bow will still be seen.

HYMN LXXXIII.

THUNDER.

1 WHEN a black o'erspreading cloud
Has darken'd all the air,
And peals of thunder, roaring loud,
Proclaim the tempest near;

2 Then guilt and fear, the fruits of sin,
The sinner oft pursue:
A louder storm is heard within,
And conscience thunders too.

3 The law a fiery language speaks,
His danger he perceives;
Like Satan, who his ruin seeks,
He trembles and believes.

4 But when the sky serene appears,
And thunders roll no more,
He soon forgets his vows and fears,
Just as he did before.

5 But whither shall the sinner flee,
When nature's mighty frame,
The pond'rous earth, and air, and sea,†
Shall all dissolve in flame?

6 Amazing day! it comes apace:
The Judge is hasting down:
Will sinners bear to see his face,
Or stand before his frown?

7 Lord, let thy mercy find a way
To touch each stubborn heart;
That they may never hear thee say,
"Ye cursed ones, depart."

8 Believers, you may well rejoice!
The thunder's loudest strains
Should be to you a welcome voice,
That tells you, "JESUS REIGNS."

HYMN LXXXIV.

LIGHTNING IN THE NIGHT.

1 A GLANCE from heaven with sweet effect
Sometimes my pensive spirit cheers;
But ere I can my thoughts collect,
As suddenly it disappears.

2 So lightning in the gloom of night
Affords a momentary day;
Disclosing objects full in sight,
Which, soon as seen, are snatch'd away.

3 Ah! what avail these pleasing scenes?
They do but aggravate my pain;
While darkness quickly intervenes,
And swallows up my joys again.

4 But shall I murmur at relief?
Though short, it was a precious view,
Sent to control my unbelief,
And prove that what I read is true.

5 The lightning's flash did not create
The op'ning prospect it reveal'd;
But only shew'd the real state
Of what the darkness had conceal'd.

6 Just so, we by a glimpse discern
The glorious things within the vail;
That, when in darkness, we may learn
To live by faith, till light prevail.

7 The Lord's great day will soon advance,
Dispersing all the shades of night;
Then we no more shall need a glance,
But see by an eternal light.

HYMN LXXXV.

ON THE ECLIPSE OF THE MOON, JULY 30, 1776

1 THE moon in silver glory shone,
And not a cloud in sight,
When suddenly a shade begun
To intercept her light.

2 How fast across her orb it spread,
How fast her light withdrew!
A circle, ting'd with languid red,
Was all appear'd in view.

3 While many, with unmeaning eye,
Gaze on thy works in vain,
Assist me, Lord, that I may try
Instruction to obtain.

4 Fain would my thankful heart and lips
Unite in praise to thee,
And meditate on thy eclipse
In sad Gethsemane.

5 Thy people's guilt, a heavy load,
(When standing in their room)
Depriv'd thee of the light of God,
And fill'd thy soul with gloom.

6 How punctually eclipses move,
Obedient to thy will!
Thus shall thy faithfulness and love
Thy promises fulfil.

7 Dark like the moon without the sun,
I mourn thine absence, Lord!
For light or comfort I have none,
But what thy beams afford.

* Rev. iv. 3. † 2 Pet. iii. 10.

8 But lo! the hour draws near apace,
When changes shall be o'er,
Then I shall see thee face to face,
And be eclips'd no more.

HYMN LXXXVI.

MOON-LIGHT.

1 THE moon has but a borrow'd light,
A faint and feeble ray;
She owes her beauty to the night,
And hides herself by day.

2 No cheering warmth her beam conveys,
Though pleasing to behold;
We might upon her brightness gaze
Till we were starv'd with cold.

3 Just such is all the light to man
Which reason can impart;
It cannot shew one object plain,
Nor warm the frozen heart.

4 Thus moon-light views of truths divine
To many fatal prove,
For what avail in gifts to shine,*
Without a spark of love?

5 The gospel, like the sun at noon,
Affords a glorious light;
Then fallen reason's boasted moon
Appears no longer bright.

6 And grace not light alone bestows,
But adds a quick'ning power;
The desert blossoms like the rose,†
And sin prevails no more.

HYMN LXXXVII.

THE SEA.‡

1 IF, for a time, the air be calm,
Serene and smooth the sea appears,
And shews no danger to alarm
The unexperienc'd landsman's fears:

2 But if the tempest once arise,
The faithless water swells and raves;
Its billows, foaming to the skies,
Disclose a thousand threat'ning graves.

3 My untried heart thus seem'd to me
(So little of myself I knew)
Smooth as the calm unruffled sea,
But, ah! it prov'd as treach'rous too!

4 The peace of which I had a taste,
When Jesus first his love reveal'd,
I fondly hop'd, would always last,
Because my foes were then conceal'd.

5 But when I felt the tempter's power,
Rouse my corruptions from their sleep,
I trembled at the stormy hour,
And saw the horrors of the deep.

6 Now on presumption's billows borne,
My spirit seem'd the Lord to dare;
Now, quick as thought, a sudden turn
Plung'd me in gulfs of black despair.

7 Lord, save me, or I sink, I prayed,
He heard, and bid the tempest cease;
The angry waves his word obeyed,
And all my fears were hush'd to peace.

8 The peace is his, and not my own,
My heart (no better than before)
Is still to dreadful changes prone,
Then let me never trust it more.

HYMN LXXXVIII.

THE FLOOD.

1 THOUGH small the drops of falling rain,
If one be singly view'd;
Collected they o'erspread the plain,
And form a mighty flood.

2 The house it meets with in its course
Should not be built on clay,
Lest, with a wild resistless force,
It sweep the whole away.

3 Though for a while it seem'd secure,
It will not bear the shock,
Unless it has foundations sure,
And stands upon a rock.

4 Thus sinners think their evil deeds,
Like drops of rain, are small;
But it the power of thought exceeds,
To count the sum of all.

5 One sin can raise, though small it seems,
A flood to drown the soul;
What then, when countless million streams
Shall join to swell the whole?

6 Yet, while they think the weather fair,
If warn'd, they smile or frown;
But they will tremble and despair,
When the fierce flood comes down.

7 Oh! then, on Jesus ground your hope,
That stone in Zion laid;*
Lest your poor building quickly drop,
With ruin on your head.

HYMN LXXXIX.

THE THAW.

1 THE ice and snow we lately saw,
Which cover'd all the ground,
Are melted soon before the thaw,
And can no more be found.

* Matth. vii. 24. † 1 Peter ii. 6

2 Could all the art of man suffice
To move away the snow,
To clear the rivers from the ice,
Or make the waters flow?

3 No, 'tis the work of God alone;
An emblem of the power
By which he melts the heart of stone
In his appointed hour.

4 All outward means, till he appears,
Will ineffectual prove:
Though much the sinner sees and hears,
He cannot learn to love.

5 But let the stoutest sinner feel
The soft'ning warmth of grace,
Though hard as ice, or rocks, or steel,
His heart dissolves apace.

6 Seeing the blood which Jesus spilt,
To save his soul from woe,
His hatred, unbelief, and guilt,
All melt away like snow.

7 Jesus, we in thy name entreat,
Reveal thy gracious arm;
And grant thy Spirit's kindly heat,
Our frozen hearts to warm.

HYMN XC.

THE LOADSTONE.

1 As needles point towards the pole,
When touch'd by the magnetic stone;
So faith in Jesus gives the soul
A tendency before unknown.

2 Till then, by blinded passions led,
In search of fancied good we range;
The paths of disappointment tread,
To nothing fix'd, but love of change.

3 But when the Holy Ghost imparts
A knowledge of the Saviour's love,
Our wand'ring, weary, restless hearts,
Are fix'd at once, no more to move.

4 Now a new principle takes place,
Which guides and animates the will;
This love, another name for grace,
Constrains to good, and bars from ill.

5 By love's pure light we soon perceive
Our noblest bliss and proper end;
And gladly ev'ry idol leave,
To love and serve our Lord and Friend.

6 Thus borne along by faith and hope,
We feel the Saviour's words are true;
"And I, if I be lifted up,
Will draw the sinner upward too."*

* John xii. 32.

HYMN XCI.

THE SPIDER AND THE BEE.

1 On the same flower we often see
The loathsome spider and the bee;
But what they get by working there,
Is different as their natures are.

2 The bee a sweet reward obtains,
And honey well repays his pains;
Home to the hive he bears the store,
And then returns in quest of more.

3 But no sweet flowers that grace the field
Can honey to the spider yield;
A cobweb all that he can spin,
And poison all he stores within.

4 Thus in that sacred field, the word,
With flowers of God's own planting stor'd
Like bees his children feed and thrive,
And bring home honey to the hive.

5 There, spider-like, the wicked come,
And seem to taste the sweet perfume:
But the vile venom of their hearts
To poison all their food converts.

6 From the same truths believers prize,
They weave vain refuges of lies;
And from the promise licence draw,
To trifle with the holy law.

7 Lord, shall thy word of life and love
The means of death to numbers prove!
Unless thy grace our hearts renew,*
We sink to hell, with heaven in view.

HYMN XCII.

THE BEE SAVED FROM THE SPIDER.

1 The subtle spider often weaves
His unsuspected snares
Among the balmy flowers and leaves,
To which the bee repairs.

2 When in his web he sees one hang,
With a malicious joy,
He darts upon it with his fang,
To poison and destroy.

3 How welcome then some pitying friend,
To save the threaten'd bee:
The spider's treach'rous web to rend,
And set the captive free!

4 My soul has been in such a case,
When first I knew the Lord,
I hasted to the means of grace,
Where sweets I knew were stor'd.

5 Little I thought of danger near,
That soon my joys would ebb:
But, ah! I met a spider there,
Who caught me in his web.

* Book III. Hymn lxxi.

6 Then Satan rais'd his pois'nous sting,
And aim'd his blows at me;
While I, poor helpless trembling thing,
Could neither fight nor flee.

7 But, oh! the Saviour's pitying eye
Relieved me from despair;
He saw me at the point to die,
And broke the fatal snare.

8 My case his heedless saints should warn,
Or cheer them if afraid;
May you from me your danger learn,
And where to look for aid.

HYMN XCIII.

THE TAMED LION.

1 A LION, though by nature wild,
The art of man can tame;
He stands before his keeper mild,
And gentle as a lamb.

2 He watches, with submissive eye,
The hand that gives him food,
As if he meant to testify
A sense of gratitude.

3 But man himself, who thus subdues
The fiercest beasts of prey,
And nature more unfeeling shews,
And far more fierce than they.

4 Though by the Lord preserv'd and fed,
He proves rebellious still:
And while he eats his Maker's bread,
Resists his holy will.

5 Alike in vain of grace that saves,
Or threat'ning law he hears;
The savage scorns, blasphemes, and raves,
But neither loves nor fears.

6 O Saviour! how thy wond'rous power
By angels is proclaim'd!
When in their own appointed hour,
They see this lion tam'd.

7 The love thy bleeding cross displays,
The hardest heart subdues;
Here furious lions, while they gaze,
Their rage and fierceness lose.*

8 Yet we are but renew'd in part,
The lion still remains;
Lord, drive him wholly from my heart,
Or keep him fast in chains.

HYMN XCIV.

SHEEP.

1 THE Saviour calls his people sheep,
And bids them on his love rely;
For he alone their souls can keep,
And he alone their wants supply

* Isaiah xi. 6.

2 The bull can fight, the hare can flee,
The ant in summer food prepare;
But helpless sheep, and such are we,
Depend upon the Shepherd's care.

3 Jehovah is our Shepherd's name,*
Then what have we, though weak, to fear
Our sin and folly we proclaim,
If we despond while he is near.

4 When Satan threatens to devour,
When troubles press on every side,
Think of our Shepherd's care and power,
He can defend, he will provide.

5 See the rich pastures of his grace,
Where, in full streams, salvation flows!
There he appoints our resting place,
And we may feed, secure from foes.

6 There, 'midst the flock, the Shepherd dwells,
The sheep around in safety lie;
The wolf in vain with malice swells,
For he protects them with his eye.†

7 Dear Lord, if I am one of thine,
From anxious thoughts I would be free,
To trust, and love, and praise, is mine,
The care of all belongs to thee.

HYMN XCV.

THE GARDEN.

1 A GARDEN contemplation suits,
And may instruction yield,
Sweeter than all the flowers and fruits
With which the spot is fill'd.

2 Eden was Adam's dwelling-place,
While bless'd with innocence;
But sin o'erwhelm'd him with disgrace,
And drove the rebel thence.

3 Oft as the garden-walk we tread
We should bemoan his fall:
The trespass of our legal head
In ruin plung'd us all.

4 The garden of Gethsemane
The second Adam saw,
Oppress'd with woe, to set us free
From the avenging law.

5 How stupid we, who can forget,
With gardens in our sight,
His agonies and bloody sweat
In that tremendous night.

6 His church as a fair garden stands,
Which walls of love inclose,
Each tree is planted by his hands,‡
And by his blessing grows.

7 Believing hearts are gardens too,
For grace has sown its seeds,
Where once, by nature, nothing grew
But thorns and worthless weeds.

* Psal. xxiii. 1. † Micah v. 4. ‡ Isa. lxi. 3.

8 Such themes, to those who Jesus love,
May constant joys afford,
And make a barren desert prove
The garden of the Lord.

HYMN XCVI.

FOR A GARDEN-SEAT OR SUMMER-HOUSE.

1 A SHELTER from the rain or wind,*
A shade from scorching heat,
A resting-place you here may find
To ease your weary feet.

2 Enter, but with a serious thought
Consider who is near:
This is a consecrated spot,
The Lord is present here.

3 A question of the utmost weight,
While reading, meets your eye;
May conscience witness to your state,
And give a true reply!

4 Is Jesus to your heart reveal'd,
As full of truth and grace?
And is his name your hope and shield,
Your rest and hiding-place?

5 If so, for all events prepar'd
Whatever storms may rise,
He whom you love will safely guard,
And guide you to the skies.

6 No burning sun, or storm, or rain,
Will there your peace annoy;
No sin, temptation, grief or pain,
Intrude to damp your joy.

7 But if his name you have not known,
O seek him while you may!
Lest you should meet his awful frown
In that approaching day.

8 When the avenging Judge you see,
With terrors on his brow,
Where can you hide, or whither flee,
If you reject him now?

HYMN XCVII.

THE CREATURES IN THE LORD'S HANDS.

1 THE water stood like walls of brass,
To let the sons of Israel pass,†
And from the rock in rivers burst,
At Moses' prayer,‡ to quench their thirst.

2 The fire, restrain'd by God's commands,
Could only burn his people's bands;§
Too faint, when he was with them there,
To singe their garments or their hair.

3 At Daniel's feet the lions lay,¶
Like harmless lambs, nor touch'd their prey;
And ravens, which on carrion fed,
Procur'd Elijah flesh and bread.†

4 Thus creatures only can fulfil
Their great Creator's holy will;
And when his servants need their aid
His purposes must be obeyed.

5 So if his blessing he refuse,
Their power to help they quickly lose;
Sure as on creatures we depend,
Our hopes in disappointment end.

6 Then let us trust the Lord alone,
And creature-confidence disown;
Nor, if they threaten, need we fear;
They cannot hurt if he be near.

7 If instruments of pain they prove,
Still they are guided by his love,
As lancets by the surgeon's skill,
Which wound to cure and not to kill.

HYMN XCVIII

ON DREAMING.

1 WHEN slumber seals our weary eyes,
The busy fancy wakeful keeps;
The scenes which then before us rise,
Prove something in us never sleeps.

2 As in another world we seem,
A new creation of our own;
All appears real, though a dream,
And all familiar, though unknown.

3 Sometimes the mind beholds again
The past day's bus'ness in review,
Resumes the pleasure or the pain,
And sometimes all we meet is new.

4 What schemes we form! what pains we take
We fight, we run, we fly, we fall;
But all is ended when we wake,
We scarcely then a trace recal.

5 But though our dreams are often wild,
Like clouds before the driving storm,
Yet some important may be styl'd,
Sent to admonish or inform.

6 What mighty agents have access,
What friends from heaven or foes from hell,
Our minds to comfort or distress,
When we are sleeping, who can tell?

7 One thing at least, and 'tis enough,
We learn from this surprising fact,
Our dreams afford sufficient proof,
The soul without the flesh can act.

8 This life, which mortals so esteem,
That many chuse it for their all,
They will confess, was but a dream,‡
When wakened by death's awful call

* Isa. xxxii. 2. † Exod. xiv. 22. ‡ Numb. xx. 11. § Dan. iii. 27. ¶ Dan. vi. 23. † 1 Kings xvii. 6. ‡ Isa. xxix. 8.

HYMN XCIX.

THE WORLD.

1 See, the world for youth prepares,
Harlot-like, her gaudy snares!
Pleasures round her seem to wait,
But 'tis all a painted cheat.

2 Rash and unsuspecting youth
Thinks to find thee always smooth,
Always kind, till better taught,
By experience dearly bought.

3 So the calm, but faithless sea,
(Lively emblem, world, of thee,)
Tempts the shepherd from the shore,
Foreign regions to explore.

4 While no wrinkled wave is seen,
While the sky remains serene,
Fill'd with hopes and golden schemes,
Of a storm he little dreams.

5 But ere long the tempest raves,
Then he trembles at the waves;
Wishes then he had been wise,
But too late he sinks and dies.

6 Hapless thus are they, vain world,
Soon on rocks of ruin hurl'd,
Who admiring thee, untried,
Court thy pleasure, wealth, or pride.

7 Such a shipwreck had been mine,
Had not Jesus (name divine!)
Sav'd me with a mighty hand,
And restor'd my soul to land.

8 Now, with gratitude I raise
Ebenezers to his praise;
Now my rash pursuits are o'er,
I can trust thee, world, no more.

HYMN C.

THE ENCHANTMENT DISSOLVED.

1 Blinded in youth by Satan's arts,
The world to our unpractis'd hearts,
A flatt'ring prospect shows;
Our fancy forms a thousand schemes
Our gay delights and golden dreams,
And undisturb'd repose.

2 So in the desert's dreary waste,
By magic power produc'd in haste,
(As ancient fables say)
Castles, and groves, and music sweet,
The senses of the trav'ller meet,
And stop him in his way,

3 But while he listens with surprise,
The charm dissolves, the vision dies,
'Twas but enchanted ground:
Thus, if the Lord our spirit touch,
The world, which promis'd us so much,
A wilderness is found.

4 At first we start, and feel distress'd,
Convinc'd we never can have rest
In such a wretched place;
But he whose mercy breaks the charm,
Reveals his own almighty arm,
And bids us seek his face.

5 Then we begin to live indeed,
When from our sin and bondage freed
By this beloved Friend;
We follow him from day to day,
Assur'd of grace through all the way
And glory at the end.

OLNEY HYMNS,

&c.

BOOK III.

ON THE RISE, PROGRESS, CHANGES, AND COMFORTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

I. SOLEMN ADDRESSES TO SINNERS.

HYMN I.

EXPOSTULATION.

1 NO words can declare,
No fancy can paint,
What rage and despair,
What hopeless complaint,
Fill Satan's dark dwelling,
The prison beneath
What weeping, and yelling,
And gnashing of teeth!

2 Yet sinners will chuse
This dreadful abode;
Each madly pursues
The dangerous road;
Though God give them warning,
They onward will go,
They answer with scorning,
And rush upon woe.

3 How sad to behold
The rich and the poor,
The young and the old,
All blindly secure!
All posting to ruin,
Refusing to stop!
Ah! think what you're doing,
While yet there is hope.

4 How weak is your hand,
To fight with the Lord!
How can you withstand
The edge of his sword?
What hope of escaping
For those who oppose,
When hell is wide gaping
To swallow his foes!

5 How oft have you dar'd
The Lord to his face!
Yet still you are spar'd
To hear of his grace;
Oh! pray for repentance
And life-giving faith,
Before the just sentence
Consign you to death.

6 It is not too late
To Jesus to flee,
His mercy is great,
His pardon is free;
His blood has such virtue
For all that believe,
That nothing can hurt you,
If him you receive.

HYMN II.

ALARM.

1 STOP, poor sinner! stop, and think,
Before you farther go!
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?

Once again, I charge you, stop!
For, unless you warning take,
Ere you are aware, you drop
Into the burning lake!

2 Say, have you an arm like God,
That you his will oppose?
Fear you not that iron rod
With which he breaks his foes?
Can you stand in that dread day,
When he judgment shall proclaim,
And the earth shall melt away,
Like wax before the flame?

3 Pale-fac'd death will quickly come,
To drag you to his bar;
Then to hear your awful doom
Will fill you with despair:
All your sins will round you crowd,
Sins of a blood-crimson dye;
Each for vengeance crying loud,
And what can you reply?

4 Though your heart be made of steel,
Your forehead lin'd with brass,
God at length will make you feel,
He will not let you pass:
Sinners then in vain will call,
(Though they now despise his grace)
Rocks and mountains on us fall,*
And hide us from his face.

5 But as yet there is a hope
You may his mercy know,
Though his arm is lifted up,
He still forbears the blow:
'Twas for sinners Jesus died,
Sinners he invites to come;
None who come shall be denied,
He says, "There still is room."†

HYMN III.

WE WERE ONCE AS YOU ARE.

1 Shall men pretend to pleasure,
Who never knew the Lord,
Can all the worldling's treasure
True peace of mind afford?
They shall obtain this jewel
In what their hearts desire,
When they by adding fuel
Can quench the flame of fire.

2 Till you can bid the ocean,
When furious tempests roar,‡
Forget its wonted motion,
And rage and swell no more;
In vain your expectation
To find content in sin,
Or freedom from vexation,
While passions reign within.

3 Come turn your thoughts to Jesus,
If you would good possess;
'Tis he alone that frees us
From guilt and from distress:
When he by faith is present,
The sinner's troubles cease;
His ways are truly pleasant,
And all his paths are peace.*

4 Our time in sin we wasted,
And fed upon the wind;
Until his love we tasted,
No comfort could we find:
But now we stand to witness
His power and grace to you
May you perceive its fitness,
And call upon him too!

5 Our pleasure and our duty,
Though opposite before,
Since we have seen his beauty,
Are join'd to part no more:
It is our highest pleasure,
No less than duty's call,
To love him beyond measure,
And serve him with our all.

HYMN IV.

PREPARE TO MEET GOD.

1 SINNER, art thou still secure?
Wilt thou still refuse to pray?
Can thy heart or hands endure
In the Lord's avenging day?
See, his mighty arm is bar'd!
Awful terrors clothe his brow!
For his judgment stand prepar'd,
Thou must either break or bow.

2 At his presence nature shakes,
Earth affrighted hastes to flee,
Solid mountains melt like wax;
What will then become of thee?
Who his advent may abide?
You that glory in your shame,
Will you find a place to hide
When the world is wrapt in flame?

3 Then the rich, the great, the wise,
Trembling, guilty, self-condemn'd,
Must behold the wrathful eyes
Of the Judge they once blaspheme'd.
Where are now their haughty looks?
Oh their horror and despair!
When they see the open'd books,
And their dreadful sentence hear!

4 Lord, prepare us by thy grace!
Soon we must resign our breath;
And our souls be call'd to pass
Through the iron gate of death:
Let us now our day improve,
Listen to the gospel-voice;
Seek the things that are above,
Scorn the world's pretended joys.

* Rev. vi. 16. † Luke xiv. 22. ‡ Isa. lvii. 20

* Prov. iii. 17.

5 Oh! when flesh and heart shall fail,
Let thy love our spirits cheer;
Strengthen'd thus, we shall prevail
Over Satan, sin, and fear:
Trusting in thy precious name,
May we thus our journey end;
Then our foes shall lose their aim,
And the Judge will be our friend.

HYMN V.

INVITATION.

1 SINNERS, hear the Saviour's call,
He now is passing by;
He has seen thy grievous thrall,
And heard thy mournful cry,
He has pardons to impart,
Grace to save thee from thy fears;
See the love that fills his heart,
And wipe away thy tears.

2 Why art thou afraid to come,
And tell him all thy case?
He will not pronounce thy doom,
Nor frown thee from his face:
Wilt thou fear Emmanuel?
Wilt thou dread the Lamb of God,
Who, to save thy soul from hell,
Has shed his precious blood?

3 Think how on the cross he hung,
Pierc'd with a thousand wounds!
Hark, from each, as with a tongue,
The voice of pardon sounds!
See, from all his bursting veins,
Blood of wondrous virtue flow!
Shed to wash away thy stains,
And ransom thee from woe.

4 Though his majesty be great,
His mercy is no less;
Though he thy transgressions hate,
He feels for thy distress:
By himself the Lord hath sworn,
He delights not in thy death,*
But invites thee to return,
That thou may'st live by faith.

5 Raise thy downcast eyes, and see
What throngs his throne surround!
These, though sinners once like thee,
Have full salvation found:
Yield not then to unbelief!
While he says, "There yet is room."
Though of sinners thou art chief
Since Jesus calls thee, come.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 75, 91
Book II. Hymn 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 35, 77, 78, 81

II. SEEKING, PLEADING, AND HOPING.

HYMN VI.

THE BURDENED SINNER.

1 AH! what can I do,
Or where be secure!
If justice pursue,
What heart can endure?
The heart breaks asunder,
Though hard as a stone,
When God speaks in thunder,
And makes himself known.

2 With terror I read
My sins heavy score,
The numbers exceed
The sands on the shore;
Guilt makes me unable
To stand or to flee;
So Cain murder'd Abel,
And trembled like me

3 Each sin, like his blood,
With a terrible cry,
Calls loudly on God
To strike from on high:
Nor can my repentance,
Extorted by fear,
Reverse the just sentence,
'Tis just, though severe.

4 The case is too plain,
I have my own choice;
Again, and again,
I slighted his voice,
His warnings neglected,
His patience abus'd,
His gospel rejected,
His mercy refus'd.

5 And must I then go,
For ever to dwell
In torments and woe,
With devils in hell?

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Oh! where is the Saviour
I scorn'd in times past?
His word in my favour
Would save me at last.

6 Lord Jesus on thee
I venture to call,
Oh look upon me,
The vilest of all!
For whom didst thou languish,
And bleed on the tree?
O pity my anguish,
And say, "'Twas for thee.'

7 A case such as mine
Will honour thy power;
All hell will repine,
All heaven will adore;
If in condemnation
Strict justice takes place,
It shines in salvation,
More glorious through grace.

HYMN VII.

BEHOLD, I AM VILE!

1 O LORD, how vile am I,
Unholy and unclean!
How can I dare to venture nigh
With such a load of sin?

2 Is this polluted heart
A dwelling fit for thee?
Swarming, alas! in ev'ry part,
What evils do I see!

3 If I attempt to pray,
And lisp thy holy name,
My thoughts are hurried soon away,
I know not where I am.

4 If in thy word I look,
Such darkness fills my mind,
I only read a sealed book,
But no relief can find.

5 Thy gospel oft I hear,
But hear it still in vain;
Without desire, or love, or fear,
I like a stone remain.

6 Myself can hardly bear
This wretched heart of mine;
How hateful, then, must it appear
To those pure eyes of thine?

7 And must I then indeed
Sink in despair and die? [bleed
Fain would I hope that thou didst
For such a wretch as I.

8 That blood which thou hast spilt,
That grace which is thine own,
Can cleanse the vilest sinner's guilt,
And soften hearts of stone.

9 Low at thy feet I bow,
O pity and forgive!
Here will I lie, and wait till thou
Shalt bid me rise and live.

HYMN VIII.

THE SHINING LIGHT.

1 My former hopes are fled,
My terror now begins;
I feel, alas! that I am dead
In trespasses and sins.

2 Ah! whither shall I fly?
I hear the thunder roar;
The law proclaims destruction nigh,
And vengeance at the door.

3 When I review my ways,
I dread impending doom;
But sure a friendly whisper says,
"Flee from the wrath to come.

4 I see, or think I see,
A glimm'ring from afar;
A beam of day that shines for me,
To save me from despair.

5 Forerunner of the sun,*
It marks the pilgrim's way;
I'll gaze upon it while I run,
And watch the rising day.

C.

HYMN IX.

ENCOURAGEMENT.

1 My soul is beset
With grief and dismay,
I owe a vast debt,
And nothing can pay:
I must go to prison,
Unless that dear Lord,
Who died and is risen,
His pity afford.

2 The death that he died,
The blood that he spilt,
To sinners applied,
Discharge from all guilt:
This great intercessor
Can give, if he please,
The vilest transgressor
Immediate release.

3 When nail'd to the tree,
He answer'd the prayer
Of one who, like me,
Was nigh to despair;†

* Psal. cxxx. 6 † Luke xxiii. 43.

He did not upbraid him
With all he had done,
But instantly made him
A saint and a son.

4 The jailor, I read,
A pardon receiv'd:*
And how was he freed?
He only believ'd:
His case mine resembled,
Like me he was foul,
Like me too he trembled,
But faith made him whole.

5 Though Saul in his youth,
To madness enrag'd,
Against the Lord's truth
And people engag'd;
Yet Jesus, the Saviour,
Whom long he revil'd,†
Receiv'd him to favour,
And made him a child.

6 A foe to all good,
In wickedness skill'd,
Manasseh with blood
Jerusalem fill'd;‡
In evil long harden'd,
The Lord he defied;
Yet he too was pardon'd
When mercy he cried.

7 Of sinners the chief,
And viler than all,
The jailor or thief,
Manasseh or Saul;
Since they were forgiven,
Why should I despair,
While Christ is in heaven,
And still answers prayer.

HYMN X.

THE WAITING SOUL.

1 BREATHE from the gentle south, O Lord,
And cheer me from the north;
Blow on the treasures of thy word,
And call the spices forth!

2 I wish, thou know'st to be resign'd,
And wait with patient hope;
But hope delayed fatigues the mind,
And drinks the spirits up.

3 Help me to reach the distant goal,
Confirm my feeble knee,
Pity the sickness of a soul
That faints for love of thee.

4 Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet since I feel it so
It yields some hope of life divine,
Within, however low.

5 I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar,
And ev'ry door is shut but one
And that is mercy's door.

6 There, till the dear Deliv'rer come,
I'll wait with humble prayer;
And when he calls his exile home,
The Lord shall find him there

HYMN XI.

THE EFFORT

1 CHEER up, my soul, there is a mercy-seat
Sprinkled with blood, where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly cast thyself beneath his feet,
For never needy sinner perish'd there.

2 Lord, I am come! thy promise is my plea,
Without thy word I durst not venture nigh;
But thou hast call'd the burden'd soul to thee,
A weary, burden'd soul, O Lord, am I!

3 Bow'd down beneath a heavy load of sin,
By Satan's fierce temptations sorely prest,
Beset without, and full of fears within,
Trembling and faint, I come to thee for rest

4 Be thou my refuge, Lord, my hiding-place,
I know no force can tear me from thy side;
Unmov'd I then may all accusers face,
And answer ev'ry charge with "Jesus died.'

5 Yes, thou didst weep, and bleed, and groan, and die,
Well hast thou known what fierce temptations mean;
Such was thy love; and now, enthron'd on high,
The same compassions in thy bosom reign.

6 Lord, give me faith:—he hears: what grace is this!
Dry up thy tears, my soul, and cease to grieve;
He shews me what he did, and who he is,
I must, I will, I can, I do believe.

HYMN XII.

ANOTHER.

1 APPROACH, my soul, the mercy-seat
Where Jesus answers prayer,
There humbly fall before his feet,
For none can perish there

2 Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burden'd souls to thee,
And, such, O Lord, am I

* Acts xvi. 13. † 1 Tim. i. 16.
‡ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

3 Bow'd down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely press'd,
By wars without, and fears within,
I come to thee for rest.

4 Be thou my shield and hiding-place!
That, shelter'd near thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face,
And tell him, "Thou hast died.'

5 O wond'rous love! to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners, such as I,
Might plead thy gracious name.

6 "Poor tempest-tossed soul, be still,
My promis'd grace receive:"
'Tis Jesus speaks,—I must, I will,
I can, I do believe.

HYMN XIII.

SEEKING THE BELOVED.

1 To those who know the Lord, I speak,
Is my beloved near?
The bridegroom of my soul I seek,
O when will he appear!

2 Though once a man of grief and shame,
Yet now he fills a throne,
And bears the greatest, sweetest name,
That earth or heaven have known.

3 Grace flies before, and love attends
His steps where'er he goes;
Though none can see him but his friends,
And they were once his foes.

4 He speaks—obedient to his call
Our warm affections move;
Did he but shine alike on all,
Then all alike would love.

5 Then love in every heart would reign,
And war would cease to roar;
And cruel and blood-thirsty men
Would thirst for blood no more.

6 Such Jesus is, and such his grace,
O may he shine on you!*
And tell him, when you see his face,
I long to see him too.

C.

HYMN XIV.

REST FOR WEARY SOULS.

1 Does the gospel-word proclaim
Rest for those who weary be? †
Then, my soul, put in thy claim,
Sure that promise speaks to thee:
Marks of grace I cannot shew,
All polluted is my best;
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest.

2 Burden'd with a load of sin,
Harrass'd with tormenting doubt,
Hourly conflicts from within,
Hourly crosses from without:
All my little strength is gone,
Sink I must without supply;
Sure upon the earth is none
Can more weary be than I.

3 In the ark the weary dove ‡
Found a welcome resting-place;
Thus my spirit longs to prove
Rest in Christ, the ark of grace.
Tempest-toss'd I long have been,
And the flood increases fast;
Open, Lord, and take me in,
Till the storm be overpast.

4 Safely lodg'd within thy breast,
What a wondrous change I find!
Now I know thy promis'd rest
Can compose a troubled mind:
You that weary are, like me,
Harken to the gospel-call;
To the ark for refuge flee,
Jesus will receive you all!

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 45, 69, 82, 83, 84. 96.
Book II. Hymn 29.

III. CONFLICT.

HYMN XV.

LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS.

1 God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

2 Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

* Cant. v. 8. † Matth. xi. 28.
‡ Gen. viii. 9.

3 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

4 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.

5 His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

6 Blind unbelief is sure to err,*
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

HYMN XVI.

WELCOME CROSS.

1 'Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross,
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss:
Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.

2 God, in Israel, sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up, and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil:
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

3 Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way;
Might I not with reason fear,
I should prove a cast-away,
Bastards may escape the rod,†
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not, if he might.

C.

HYMN XVII.

AFFLICTIONS SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD.

1 O how I love thy holy word,
Thy gracious covenant, O Lord!
It guides me in the peaceful way,
I think upon it all the day.

2 What are the mines of shining wealth,
The strength of youth, the bloom of health!
What are all joys compar'd with those
Thine everlasting word bestows.

* John xiii. 7. † Heb. xii. 8.

3 Long unafflicted, undismayed,
In pleasure's path secure I strayed;
Thou mad'st me feel thy chast'ning rod,*
And straight I turn'd unto my God.

4 What though it pierc'd my fainting heart,
I bless thine hand that caus'd the smart;
It taught my tears a while to flow,
But sav'd me from eternal woe.

5 Oh! hadst thou left me unchastis'd,
Thy precepts I had still despis'd;
And still the snare in secret laid,
Had my unwary feet betrayed.

6 I love thee, therefore, O my God!
And breathe towards thy dear abode,
Where in thy presence fully blest,
Thy chosen saints for ever rest.

C.

HYMN XVIII.

TEMPTATION.

1 The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to thee I call,
My fears are great, my strength is small.

2 O Lord! the pilot's part perform,
And guide and guard me thro' the storm;
Defend me from each threat'ning ill,
Control the waves, say, "Peace, be still."

3 Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hope on thee;
Thy constant love, thy faithful care
Is all that saves me from despair.

4 Dangers of every shape and name
Attend the followers of the Lamb,
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,
And leave it to return no more.

5 Though tempest-toss'd, and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter'd bark again.

C.

HYMN XIX.

LOOKING UPWARDS IN A STORM.

1 God of my life, to thee I call,
Afflicted at thy feet I fall;†
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail!

2 Friend of the friendless and the faint!
Where should I lodge my deep complaint
Where but with thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor.

3 Did ever mourner plead with thee,
And thou refuse that mourner's plea?
Does not the word still fix'd remain,
That none shall seek thy face in vain?

* Psal. cxix. 71. † Psal lxix. 15.

4 That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst thou not hear and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answ'ring God,
Supports me under every load.

5 Fair is the lot that's cast for me;
I have an advocate with thee;
They whom the world carresses most,
Have no such privilege to boast.

6 Poor, though I am, despis'd, forgot,*
Yet God, my God, forgets me not;
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.

C.

HYMN XX.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

1 My soul is sad and much dismayed;
See, Lord, what legions of my foes,
With fierce Apollyon at their head,
My heavenly pilgrimage oppose!

2 See, from the ever-burning lake,
How like a smoky cloud they rise!
With horrid blasts my soul they shake,
With storms of blasphemies and lies.

3 Their fiery arrows reach the mark,†
My throbbing heart with anguish tear;
Each lights upon a kindred spark,
And finds abundant fuel there.

4 I hate the thought that wrongs the Lord;
Oh! I would drive it from my breast,
With my own sharp two-edged sword,
Far as the east is from the west.

5 Come, then and chase the cruel host,
Heal the deep wounds I have receiv'd!
Nor let the powers of darkness boast,
That I am foil'd, and thou art griev'd.

C.

HYMN XXI.

THE STORM HUSHED.

1 'Tis past—the dreadful stormy night
Is gone, with all its fears!
And now I see returning light,
The Lord, my Sun, appears.

2 The tempter, who but lately said,
I soon should be his prey,
Has heard my Saviour's voice, and fled
With shame and grief away.

3 Ah! Lord, since thou didst hide thy face,
What has my soul endur'd?
But now 'tis past,—I feel thy grace,
And all my wounds are cur'd!

4 O wondrous change! but just before,
Despair beset me round,
I heard the lion's horrid roar,
And trembled at the sound.

5 Before corruption, guilt, and fear,
My comforts blasted fell;
And unbelief discover'd near
The dreadful depths of hell.

6 But Jesus pitied my distress,
He heard my feeble cry,
Reveal'd his blood and righteousness
And brought salvation nigh.

7 Beneath the banner of his love
I now secure remain;
The tempter frets, but dares not move,
To break my peace again.

8 Lord, since thou thus hast broke my bands,
And set the captive free,
I would devote my tongue, my hands,
My heart, my all, to thee.

HYMN XXII.

RELP IN TIME OF NEED.

1 UNLESS the Lord had been my stay,
With trembling joy my soul may say,
My cruel foe had gain'd his end:
But he appear'd for my relief,
And Satan sees with shame and grief,
That I have an almighty Friend.

2 Oh! 'twas a dark and trying hour,
When, harass'd by the tempter's power
I felt my strongest hopes decline!
You only who have known his arts,
You only who have felt his darts,
Can pity such a case as mine.

3 Loud in my ears a charge he read,
(My conscience witness'd all he said),
My long black list of outward sin;
Then bringing forth my heart to view,
Too well what's hidden there he knew,
He shew'd me ten times worse within.

4 'Twas all too true, my soul replied,
But I remember Jesus died,
And now he fills a throne of grace:
I'll go as I have done before,
His mercy I may still implore,
I have his promise, "Seek my face."

5 But, as when sudden fogs arise,
The trees and hills, the sun and skies,
Are all at once conceal'd from view;
So clouds of horror, black as night,
By Satan rais'd, hid from my sight
The throne of grace and promise too.

6 Then, while beset with guilt and fear,
He tried to urge me to despair,
He tried, and he almost prevail'd;
But Jesus by a heavenly ray,
Drove clouds, and guilt, and fear away,
And all the tempter's malice fail'd.

* Psal. xl. 17. † Eph. vi. 16

HYMN XXIII.

PEACE AFTER A STORM.

1 When darkness long has veil'd my mind,
And smiling day once more appears,
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
The folly of my doubts and fears.

2 Straight I upbraid my wand'ring heart,
And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
Or harbour one hard thought of thee!

3 Oh! let me then at length be taught,
What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is love, and changes not,
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

4 Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

5 But, O my Lord, one look from thee
Subdues the disobedient will,
Drives doubt and discontent away,
And thy rebellious worm is still.

6 Thou art as ready to forgive,
As I am ready to repine;
Thou, therefore, all the praise receive,
Be shame and self-abhorrence mine.

C.

HYMN XXIV.

MOURNING AND LONGING.

1 The Saviour hides his face!
My spirit thirsts to prove
Renew'd supplies of pard'ning grace,
And never-fading love.

2 The favour'd souls who know
What glories shine in him,
Pant for his presence, as the roe
Pants for the living stream.

3 What trifles tease me now!
They swarm like summer-flies,
They cleave to every thing I do,
And swim before my eyes.

How dull the Sabbath-day,
Without the Sabbath's Lord!
How toilsome then to sing and pray,
And wait upon the word!

5 Of all the truths I hear,
How few delight my taste!
I glean a berry here and there,
But mourn the vintage past.

6 Yet let me (as I ought)
Still hope to be supplied;
No pleasure else is worth a thought,
Nor shall I be denied.

7 Though I am but a worm,
Unworthy of his care,
The Lord will my desire perform,
And grant me all my prayer.

C.

HYMN XXV.

REJOICE THE SOUL OF THY SERVANT.

1 When my prayers are a burden and task,
No wonder I little receive;
O Lord! make me willing to ask,
Since thou art so ready to give:
Although I am bought with thy blood,
And all thy salvation is mine,
At a distance from thee my chief good,
I wander, and languish, and pine.

2 Of thy goodness of old when I read,
To those who were sinners like me,
Why may I not wrestle and plead,
With them a partaker to be?
Thine arm is not short'ned since then,
And those who believe in thy name,
Ever find thou art Yea and Amen,
Through all generations the same.

3 While my spirit within me is press'd
With sorrow, temptation, and fear,
Like John, I would flee to thy breast,*
And pour my complaints in thine ear:
How happy and favour'd was he,
Who could on thy bosom repose!
Might this favour be granted to me,
I'd smile at the rage of my foes.

4 I have heard of thy wonderful name,
How great and exalted thou art;
But ah! I confess to my shame,
It faintly impresses my heart:
The beams of thy glory display,
As Peter once saw thee appear;
That, transported like him, I may say,
"It is good for my soul to be here."†

5 What a sorrow and weight didst thou feel,
When nail'd, for my sake, to the tree!
My heart sure is harder than steel,
To feel no more sorrow for thee;
Oh! let me with Thomas descry
The wounds in thy hands and thy side,
And have feelings like his, when I cry,
"My God and my Saviour has died!"‡

6 But if thou hast appointed me still
To wrestle, and suffer, and fight;
O make me resign to thy will,
For all thine appointments are right:
This mercy, at least, I entreat,
That, knowing how vile I have been,
I, with Mary, may wait at thy feet,§
And weep o'er the pardon of sin.

* John xiii. 25. † Matth. xvii. 6.
‡ John xx. 28. § Luke vii. 38.

HYMN XXVI.

SELF-ACQUAINTANCE.

1 Dear Lord! accept a sinful heart,
Which of itself complains,
And mourns, with much and frequent smart,
The evil it contains.

2 There fiery seeds of anger lurk,
Which often hurt my frame;
And wait but for the tempter's work,
To fan them to a flame.

3 Legality holds out a bribe
To purchase life from thee;
And discontent would fain perscribe
How thou shalt deal with me.

4 While unbelief withstands thy grace,
And puts the mercy by,
Presumption, with a brow of brass,
Says, "Give me, or I die."

5 How eager are my thoughts to roam
In quest of what they love;
But, ah! when duty calls them home,
How heavily they move!

6 O cleanse me in a Saviour's blood!
Transform me by thy power;
And make me thy belov'd abode,
And let me rove no more.

C.

HYMN XXVII.

BITTER AND SWEET.

1 Kindle, Saviour, in my heart
A flame of love divine:
Hear, for mine I trust thou art,
And sure I would be thine:
If my soul has felt thy grace,
If to me thy name is known,
Why should trifles fill the place
Due to thyself alone?

2 'Tis a strange mysterious life
I live from day to day;
Light and darkness, peace and strife,
Bear an alternate sway:
When I think the battle won,
I have to fight it o'er again;
When I say I'm overthrown,
Relief I soon obtain.

3 Often at the mercy seat,
While calling on thy name,
Swarms of evil thoughts I meet,
Which fill my soul with shame:
Agitated in my mind,
Like a feather in the air,
Can I thus a blessing find?
My soul, can this be prayer?

4 But when Christ, my Lord and Friend,
Is pleas'd to shew his power;
All at once my troubles end,
And I've a golden hour:
Then I see his smiling face,
Feel the pledge of joys to come;
Often, Lord, repeat this grace,
Till thou shalt call me home

HYMN XXVIII.

PRAYER FOR PATIENCE.

1 Lord, who hast suffer'd all for me,
My peace and pardon to procure,
The lighter cross I bear for thee
Help me with patience to endure.

2 The storm of loud repining hush;
I would in humble silence mourn; [bush,
Why should the unburnt, though burning
Be angry, as the crackling thorn?

3 Man should not faint at thy rebuke,
Like Joshua falling on his face,*
When the curs'd thing that Achan took
Brought Israel into just disgrace.

4 Perhaps some golden wedge suppress'd,
Some secret sin offends my God;
Perhaps that Babylonish vest,
Self-righteousness, provokes the rod.

5 Ah! were I buffeted all day,
Mock'd, crown'd with thorns, and spit upon,
I yet should have no right to say,
My great distress is mine alone.

6 Let me not angrily declare,
No pain was ever sharp like mine,
Nor murmur at the cross I bear,
But rather weep, rememb'ring thine.

C

HYMN XXIX.

SUBMISSION.

1 O Lord, my best desire fulfil,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to thy will,
And make thy pleasure mine.

2 Why should I shrink at thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears,
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

3 No, let me rather freely yield
What most I prize to thee;
Who never hast a good with-held,
Or wilt with-hold from me.

* Joshua vii. 10, 11.

4 Thy favour all my journey through
Thou art engag'd to grant;
What else I want, or think I do,
'Tis better still to want.

5 Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor blind creature of a day,
And crush'd before the moth!

6 But, ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still bind me to thy sway;
Else the next cloud that vails my skies
Drives all these thoughts away.

C.

HYMN XXX.

WHY SHOULD I COMPLAIN?

1 WHEN my Saviour, my Shepherd is near,
How quickly my sorrows depart!
New beauties around me appear,
New spirits enliven my heart:
His presence gives peace to my soul,
And Satan assaults me in vain;
While my Shepherd his power controuls,
I think I no more shall complain.

2 But, alas! what a change do I find, [sight!
When my Shepherd withdraws from my
My fears all return to my mind,
My day is soon chang'd into night:
Then Satan his efforts renews
To vex and ensnare me again;
All my pleasing enjoyments I lose,
And can only lament and complain.

3 By these changes I often pass through,
I am taught my own weakness to know;
I am taught what my Shepherd can do,
And how much to his mercy I owe:
It is he that supports me through all;
When I faint, he revives me again;
He attends to my prayer when I call,
And bids me no longer complain.

4 Wherefore then should I murmur and grieve,
Since my Shepherd is always the same,
And has promis'd he never will leave*
The soul that confides in his name?
To relieve me from all that I fear,
He was buffeted, tempted, and slain;
And at length he will surely appear,
Though he leaves me a while to complain.

5 While I dwell in an enemy's land,
Can I hope to be always in peace!
'Tis enough that my Shepherd's at hand,
And that shortly this warfare will cease;
For ere long he will bid me remove†
From this region of sorrow and pain,
To abide in his presence above,
And then I no more shall complain.

* Jer. i. 19. † Rev. ii. 10

HYMN XXXI.

RETURN, O LORD, HOW LONG!

1 RETURN to bless my waiting eyes,
And cheer my mourning heart, O Lord!
Without thee, all beneath the skies
No real pleasure can afford.

2 When thy lov'd presence meets my sight,
It softens care and sweetens toil;
The sun shines forth with double light,
The whole creation wears a smile.

3 Upon thine arm of love I rest,
Thy gracious voice forbids my fear;
No storms disturb my peaceful breast,
No foes assault when thou art near.

4 But ah! since thou hast been away,
Nothing but trouble have I known;
And Satan marks me for his prey
Because he sees me left alone.

5 My sun is hid, my comforts lost,
My graces droop, my sins revive;
Distress'd, dismayed, and tempest-toss'd,
My soul is only just alive.

6 Lord, hear my cry, and come again!
Put all mine enemies to shame,
And let them see 'tis not in vain
That I have trusted in thy name.

HYMN XXXII

CAST DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED.

1 THOUGH sore beset with guilt and fear,
I cannot, dare not quite despair;
If I must perish, would the Lord
Have taught my heart to love his word?
Would he have given me eyes to see*
My danger and my remedy,
Reveal'd his name, and bid me pray,
Had he resolv'd to say me nay?

2 No—though cast down, I am not slain·
I fall, but I shall rise again;†
The present, Satan, is thy hour,
But Jesus shall control thy power;
His love will plead for my relief,
He hears my groans, he feels my grief
Nor will he suffer thee to boast
A soul that thought his help was lost.

3 'Tis true, I have unfaithful been,
And griev'd his Spirit by my sin;
Yet still his mercy he'll reveal,
And all my wounds and follies heal:
Abounding sin I must confess,‡
But more abounding is his grace;
He once vouchsaf'd for me to bleed,
And now he lives my cause to plead.

* Judges xiii. 23. † Micah vii. 8. ‡ Rom. v. 20.

4 I'll cast myself before his feet,
I see him on his mercy-seat,
('Tis sprinkled with atoning blood);
There sinners find access to God:
Ye burden'd souls, approach with me,
And make the Saviour's name your plea;
Jesus will pardon all who come,
And strike your fierce accuser dumb.

HYMN XXXIII.

THE BENIGHTED TRAVELLER.

1 FOREST beasts, that live by prey,
Seldom shew themselves by day;
But when day-light is withdrawn,*
Then they rove and roar till dawn.

2 Who can tell the trav'ller's fears,
When their horrid yells he hears?
Terror almost stops his breath,
While each step he looks for death.

3 Thus, when Jesus is in view,
Cheerful I my way pursue;
Walking by my Saviour's light,
Nothing can my soul affright.

4 But when he forbears to shine,
Soon the trav'ller's case is mine;
Lost, benighted, struck with dread,
What a painful path I tread!

5 Then my soul with terror hears,
Worse than lions, wolves, or bears,
Roaring loud in ev'ry part,
Through the forest of my heart.

6 Wrath, impatience, envy, pride,
Satan and his host beside,
Press around me to devour;
How can I escape their power?

7 Gracious Lord, afford me light,
Put these beasts of prey to flight;
Let thy power and love be shewn;†
Save me, for I am thine own.

HYMN XXXIV

THE PRISONER.

1 WHEN the poor pris'ner through a grate
Sees others walk at large,
How does he mourn his lonely state,
And long for a discharge!

2 Thus I, confin'd in unbelief,
My loss of freedom mourn,
And spend my hours in fruitless grief,
Until my Lord return.

* Psal. civ. 20. † Psal. cxlx. 94.

3 The beam of day, which pierces through
the gloom in which I dwell,
Only discloses to my view
The horrors of my cell.

4 Ah! how my pensive spirit faints,
To think of former days!
When I could triumph with the saints,
And join their songs of praise!

5 But now my joys are all cut off,
In prison I am cast,
And Satan, with a cruel scoff,*
Says, "Where's your God at last?"

6 Dear Saviour, for thy mercy's sake,
My strong, my only plea,
These gates and bars in pieces break,†
And set the pris'ner free!

7 Surely my soul shall sing to thee,
For liberty restor'd;
And all thy saints admire to see
The mercies of the Lord.

HYMN XXXV.

PERPLEXITY RELIEVED.

1 UNCERTAIN how the way to find
Which to salvation led,
I listen'd long, with anxious mind,
To hear what others said.

2 When some of joys and comforts told,
I fear'd that I was wrong;
For I was stupid, dead, and cold,
Had neither joy nor song.

3 The Lord my lab'ring heart reliev'd,
And made my burden light;
Then for a moment I believ'd,
Supposing all was right.

4 Of fierce temptations others talk'd,
Of anguish and dismay,
Through what distresses they had walk'd
Before they found the way.

5 Ah! then I thought my hopes were vain,
For I had liv'd at ease;
I wish'd for all my fears again
To make me more like these.

6 I had my wish; the Lord disclos'd
The evils of my heart,
And left my naked soul expos'd
To Satan's fiery dart.

7 Alas! "I now must give it up,"
I cried in deep despair:
How could I dream of drawing hope
From what I cannot bear?

8 Again my Saviour brought me aid,
And when he set me free,
"Trust simply on my word," he said,
"And leave the rest to me."

* Psal. cxv. 2. † Psal. cxlii. 7.

HYMN XXXVI.

PRAYER ANSWERED BY CROSSES.

1 I ASK'D the Lord, that I might grow
In faith, and love, and ev'ry grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

2 'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answer'd prayer:
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

3 I hop'd that in some favour'd hour,
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

4 Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part.

5 Yea more, with his own hand he seem'd
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Cross'd all the fair designs I schem'd,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

6 Lord, why is this? I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith.

7 These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st seek thy all in me."

HYMN XXXVII.

I WILL TRUST, AND NOT BE AFRAID.

1 BEGONE, unbelief!
My Saviour is near,
And for my relief
Will surely appear:
By prayer let me wrestle,
And he will perform;
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm.

2 Though dark be my way,
Since he is my guide,
'Tis mine to obey,
'Tis his to provide;
Though cisterns be broken,
And creatures all fail,
The word he has spoken
Shall surely prevail.

3 His love in time past
Forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer
I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure
To help me quite through.

4 Determin'd to save,
He watch'd o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death;
And can he have taught me
To trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me
To put me to shame?

5 Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less:
The heirs of salvation,
I know from his word,
Through much tribulation
Must follow their Lord.*

6 How bitter that cup,
No heart can conceive,
Which he drank quite up,
That sinners might live!
His way was much rougher
And darker than mine;
Did Jesus thus suffer,
And shall I repine?

7 Since all that I meet
Shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet,
The med'cine is food;
Though painful at present,
'Twill cease before long,
And then, O how pleasant
The conqueror's song!†

HYMN XXXVIII.

QUESTIONS TO UNBELIEF.

1 IF to Jesus for relief
My soul has fled by prayer,
Why should I give way to grief,
Or heart-consuming care?
Are not all things in his hands?
Has he not his promise pass'd?
Will he then regardless stand,
And let me sink at last?

2 While I know his providence
Disposes each event,
Shall I judge by feeble sense,
And yield to discontent!
If he worms and sparrows feed,
Clothe the grass in rich array,‡
Can he see a child in need,
And turn his eye away?

* Acts xiv. 22. † Rom. viii. 37. ‡ Matth. vi. 26.

3 When his name was quite unknown,
And sin my life employed,
Then he watch'd me as his own,
Or I had been destroyed;
Now his mercy seat I know,
Now by grace am reconcil'd;
Would he spare me while a foe,*
To leave me when a child?

4 If he all my wants supplied,
When I disdain'd to pray,
Now his Spirit is my guide,
How can he say me nay?
If he would not give me up,
When my soul against him fought,
Will he disappoint the hope
Which he himself has wrought.

5 If he shed his precious blood
To bring me to his fold,
Can I think that meaner good†
He ever will with-hold!
Satan, vain is thy device!
Here my hope rests well assur'd,
In that great redemption-price,
I see the whole secur'd.

HYMN XXXIX.

GREAT EFFECTS BY WEAK MEANS.

1 UNBELIEF the soul dismays,
What objections will it raise
But true faith securely leans
On the promise, in the means.

2 If to faith it once be known,
God has said, "It shall be done,
And in this appointed way;"
Faith has then no more to say.

3 Moses' rod, by faith up-rear'd,‡
Through the sea a path prepar'd;
Jericho's devoted wall§
At the trumpets sound must fall.

4 With a pitcher and a lamp,‖
Gideon overthrew a camp;
And a stone, well aim'd by faith,¶
Prov'd the arm'd Philistine's death.

5 Thus the Lord is pleas'd to try
Those who on his help rely;
By the means he makes it known,
That the power is all his own.

6 Yet the means are not in vain,
If the end we would obtain;
Though the breath of prayer be weak,
None shall find but they who seek.

7 God alone the heart can reach,
Yet the ministers must preach;
'Tis their part the seed to sow,
And 'tis his to make it grow.

* Rom. v. 10 † Rom. viii. 32. ‡ Exod. xiv. 21.
§ Josh. vi. 2. ‖ Judges vii. 22. ¶ 1 Sam. xvii. 42.

HYMN XL.

WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN?

1 BE still, my heart! these anxious cares
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonour on thy Lord,
And contradict his gracious word.

2 Brought safely by his hand thus far,
Why wilt thou now give place to fear?
How canst thou want if he provide,
Or lose thy way with such a guide?

3 When first before his mercy-seat,
Thou didst to him thy all commit;
He gave thee warrant, from that hour,
To trust his wisdom, love, and power.

4 Did ever trouble yet befall,
And he refuse to hear thy call?
And has he not his promise past,
That thou shalt overcome at last?

5 Like David, thou may'st comfort draw,
Sav'd from the bear's and lion's paw;
Goliath's rage I may defy,
For God, my Saviour, still is nigh.

6 He who has helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through,
And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to his praise.

7 Though rough and thorny be the road
It leads me home, apace, to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heaven will make amends for all.

HYMN XLI.

THE WAY OF ACCESS.

1 ONE glance of thine, eternal Lord!
Pierces all nature through;
Nor heaven, nor earth, nor hell afford
A shelter from thy view.

2 The mighty whole, each smaller part,
At once before thee lies;
And every thought of every heart
Is open to thine eyes.

3 Though greatly from myself conceal'd,
Thou see'st my inward frame;
To thee I always stand reveal'd,
Exactly as I am.

4 Since, therefore, I can hardly bear
What in myself I see;
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God, to thee?

5 But since my Saviour stands between,
In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis he, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

6 Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads before the throne,
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins his own.

7 What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are his,*
And his obedience mine.

HYMN XLII.

THE PILGRIM'S SONG.

1 FROM Egypt lately freed
By the Redemer's grace,
A rough and thorny path we tread,
In hopes to see his face.

2 The flesh dislikes the way,
But faith approves it well;
This only leads to endless day,
All others lead to hell.

3 The promis'd land of peace
Faith keeps in constant view;
How diff'rent from the wilderness
We now are passing through.

4 Here often from our eyes
Clouds hide the light divine;
There we shall have unclouded skies,
Our Sun will always shine.

5 Here griefs, and cares, and pains,
And fears, distress us sore;
But there eternal pleasure reigns,
And we shall weep no more.

6 Lord, pardon our complaints,
We follow at thy call;
The joy prepar'd for suff'ring saints
Will make amends for all.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 10, 13, 21, 22, 24, 27, 40 43, 44, 51, 56, 63, 76, 88, 107, 115, 126 130, 131, 136, 142.
Book II. Hymn 30, 31, 84, 87, 92.

IV. COMFORT.

HYMN XLIII.

FAITH A NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE SENSE.

1 SIGHT, hearing, feeling, taste, and smell,
Are gifts we highly prize;
But faith does singly each excel,
And all the five comprize.

2 More piercing than the eagle's sight,
It views the world unknown,
Surveys the glorious realms of light,
And Jesus on the throne.

3 It hears the mighty voice of God,
And ponders what he saith;
His word and works, his gifts and rod,
Have each a voice to faith.

4 It feels the touch of heavenly power,†
And from that boundless source,
Derives fresh vigour every hour
To run its daily course.

5 The truth and goodness of the Lord
Are suited to its taste; ‡
Mean is the worldling's pamper'd board,
To faith's perpetual feast.

6 It smells the dear Redeemer's name
Like ointment poured forth; §
Faith only knows, or can proclaim,
Its savour or its worth.

7 Till saving faith possess the mind,
In vain of sense we boast;
We are but senseless, tasteless, blind,
And deaf, and dead, and lost.

HYMN XLIV.

THE HAPPY CHANGE.

1 How bless'd thy creature is, O Lord,
When, with a single eye,
He views the lustre of thy word,
The day-spring from on high!

2 Through all the storms that veil the skies,
And frown on earthly things,
The Sun of righteousness he eyes,
With healing on his wings.

3 Struck by that light, the human heart,*
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurk'd before.

4 The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

5 The glorious orb, whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first, obedient to thy word,
He started from the gaol,

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † Luke viii. 46.
‡ Psal. cxix. 103. § Solomon's Song i. 3
* Isa. xxxv. 7

6 Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart.

C.

HYMN XLV.

RETIREMENT.

1 Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

2 The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow thee.

3 There if thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh! with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God.

4 There, like the nigtingale, she pours
Her solitary lays,
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

5 Author and guardian of my life,
Sweet source of light divine,
And (all harmonious names in one)
My Saviour, thou art mine.

6 What thanks I owe thee, and what love,
A boundless, endless store,
Shall echo through the realms above,
When time shall be no more.

C.

HYMN XLVI.

JESUS MY ALL.

1 Why should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempter's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.

2 Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either flee or yield,
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

3 When creature-comforts fade and die,
Worldlings may weep, but why should I?
Jesus still lives, and still is nigh.

4 Though all the flocks and herds were dead,
My soul a famine need not dread,
For Jesus is my living bread.

5 I know not what may soon betide,
Or how my wants shall be supplied;
But Jesus knows and will provide.

6 Though sin would fill me with distress,
The throne of grace I dare address,
For Jesus is my righteousness.

7 Though faint my prayers, and cold my love,
My stedfast hope shall not remove,
While Jesus intercedes above.

8 Against me earth and hell combine,
But on my side is power divine;
Jesus is all, and he is mine.

HYMN XLVII.

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

1 To tell the Saviour all my wants,
How pleasing is the task!
Nor less to praise him when he grants
Beyond what I can ask.

2 My lab'ring spirit vainly seeks
To tell but half the joy;
With how much tenderness he speaks,
And helps me to reply.

3 Nor were it wise, nor should I choose,
Such secrets to declare;
Like precious wines, their taste they lose,
Expos'd to open air.

4 But this, with boldness, I proclaim,
Nor care if thousands hear,
Sweet is the ointment of his name,
Not life is half so dear.

5 And can you frown, my former friends,
Who knew what once I was,
And blame the song that thus commends
The Man who bore the cross?

6 Trust me, I draw the likeness true,
And not as fancy paints:
Such honour may he give to you,
For such have all his saints.

C

HYMN XLVIII.

JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING.

1 Sometimes a light surprises
The christian while he sings;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in his wings;
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again,
A season of clear shining,
To cheer it after rain.

2 In holy contemplation,
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new:
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
E'n let the unknown to-morrow*
Bring with it what it may

* Matth. vi 34

3 It can bring with it nothing,
But he will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing,
Will clothe his people too:
Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And he who feeds the ravens,
Will give his children bread.

4 Though vine nor fig-tree neither
Their wonted fruit shall bear, *
Though all the field should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there;
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For while in him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

HYMN XLIX.

TRUE PLEASURES.

1 LORD, my soul with pleasure springs,
When Jesus' name I hear,
And when God the Spirit brings
The word of promise near:
Beauties, too, in holiness,
Still delighted I perceive;
Nor have words that can express
The joys thy precepts give.

2 Cloth'd in sanctity and grace,
How sweet it is to see
Those who love thee as they pass,
Or when they wait on thee!
Pleasant too, to sit and tell,
What we owe to love divine,
Till our bosoms grateful swell,
And eyes begin to shine.

3 Those the comforts I possess,
Which God shall still increase;
All his ways are pleasantness,†
And all his paths are peace.
Nothing Jesus did or spoke,
Henceforth let me ever slight;
For I love his easy yoke,‡
And find his burden light.

C.

HYMN L.

THE CHRISTIAN.

1 HONOUR and happiness unite,
To make the christian's name a praise:
How fair the scene, how clear the light,
That fills the remnant of his days!

2 A kingly character he bears,
No change his priestly office knows;
Unfading is the crown he wears,
His joys can never reach a close.

3 Adorn'd with glory from on high,
Salvation shines upon his face;
His robe is of the ethereal dye,
His steps are dignity and grace.

4 Inferior honours he disdains,
Nor stoops to take applause from earth,
The King of kings himself maintains
The expenses of his heavenly birth.

5 The noblest creature seen below,
Ordain'd to fill a throne above;
God gives him all he can bestow,
His kingdom of eternal love!

6 My soul is ravish'd at the thought!
Methinks from earth I see him rise!
Angels congratulate his lot,
And shout him welcome to the skies!

C.

HYMN LI.

LIVELY HOPE AND GRACIOUS FEAR.

1 I WAS a grov'lling creature once,
And basely cleav'd to earth;
I wanted spirit to renounce
The clod that gave me birth.

2 But God has breath'd upon a worm,
And sent me, from above,
Wings, such as clothe an angel's form,
The wings of joy and love.

3 With these to Pisgah's top I fly,
And there delighted stand,
To view beyond a shining sky
The spacious promis'd land.

4 The Lord of all the vast domain
Has promis'd it to me;
The length and breadth of all the plain,
As far as faith can see.

5 How glorious is my privilege!
To thee for help I call;
I stand upon a mountain's edge,
O save me, lest I fall!

6 Though much exalted in the Lord,
My strength is not my own;
Then let me tremble at his word,
And none shall cast me down.

C.

HYMN LII.

CONFIDENCE.

1 YES! since God himself has said it,
On the promise I rely;
His good word demands my credit,
What can unbelief reply?
He is strong, and can fulfil,
He is truth, and therefore will.

* Hab iii. 17, 18. † Prov. iii. 17. ‡ Matth xi. 30

2 As to all the doubts and questions
Which my spirit often grieve,
These are Satan's sly suggestions,
And I need no answer give;
He would fain destroy my hope,
But the promise bears it up.

3 Sure the Lord thus far has brought me
By his watchful tender care;
Sure 'tis he himself has taught me
How to seek his face by prayer:
After so much mercy past,
Will he give me up at last?

4 True, I've been a foolish creature,
And have sinn'd against his grace,
But forgiveness is his nature,
Though he justly hides his face:
Ere he called me, well he knew*
What a heart like mine would do.

5 In my Saviour's intercession
Therefore I will still confide!
Lord, accept my free confession,
I have sinn'd, but thou hast died:†
This is all I have to plead,
This is all the plea I need.

HYMN LIII.

PEACE RESTORED.

1 Oh! speak that gracious word again,
And cheer my drooping heart!
No voice but thine can soothe my pain,
Or bid my fears depart.

2 And canst thou still vouchsafe to own
A wretch so vile as I?
And may I still approach thy throne,
And Abba, Father, cry?

3 O, then, let saints and angels join,
And help me to proclaim
The grace that heal'd a breach like mine,
And put my foes to shame!

4 How oft did Satan's cruel boast
My troubled soul affright!
He told me I was surely lost,
And, God had left me quite.‡

5 Guilt made me fear, lest all were true
The lying tempter said;
But now the Lord appears in view,
My enemy is fled.

6 My Saviour, by his powerful word,
Has turn'd my night to day;
And his salvation's joy's restored,
Which I had sinn'd away.

7 Dear Lord, I wonder and adore!
Thy grace is all divine!
O keep me, that I sin no more
Against such love as thine!

* Isa. xlviii. 8. † Rom. viii. 34.
‡ Psal. lxxi. 11.

HYMN LIV.

HEAR WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR MY SOUL.

1 Sav'd by blood, I live to tell
What the love of Christ hath done;
He redeem'd my soul from hell,
Of a rebel made a son:
Oh! I tremble still, to think
How secure I liv'd in sin;
Sporting on destruction's brink,
Yet preserv'd from falling in.

2 In his own appointed hour,
To my heart the Saviour spoke;
Touch'd me by his Spirit's power,
And my dang'rous slumber broke.
Then I saw and own'd my guilt,
Soon my gracious Lord replied:
"Fear not, I my blood have spilt,
'Twas for such as thee I died."

3 Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possess'd my heart;
Can I hope thy grace to prove
After acting such a part?
"Thou hast greatly sinn'd," he said,
"But I freely all forgive;
I myself thy debt have paid,
Now I bid thee rise and live."

4 Come, my fellow-sinners, try,
Jesus' heart is full of love!
O that you, as well as I,
May his wondrous mercy prove.
He has sent me to declare,
All is ready, all is free:
Why should any soul despair,
When he sav'd a wretch like me?

HYMN LV.

FREEDOM FROM CARE.

1 While I liv'd without the Lord,
(If I might be said to live,)
Nothing could relief afford,
Nothing satisfaction give.

2 Empty hopes and groundless fear
Mov'd by turns my anxious mind;
Like a feather in the air,
Made the sport of every wind.

3 Now, I see, whate'er betide,
All is well if Christ be mine;
He has promis'd to provide,
I have only to resign.

4 When a sense of sin and thrall
Forc'd me to the sinner's Friend,
He engaged to manage all,
By the way and to the end.

5 "Cast," he said, "on me thy care,*
'Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear,
I will all thy wants supply.

6 Simply follow as I lead,
Do not reason, but believe;
Call on me in time of need,
Thou shalt surely help receive."

7 Lord, I would, I do submit,
Gladly yield my all to thee;
What thy wisdom sees most fit,
Must be surely best for me.

8 Only, when the way is rough,
And the coward flesh would start,
Let thy promise and thy love
Cheer and animate my heart.

HYMN LVI.

HUMILIATION AND PRAISE.

(Imitated from the German.

1 WHEN the wounded spirit hears
The voice of Jesus' blood,
How the message stops the tears
Which else in vain had flowed:
Pardon, grace, and peace proclaim'd,
And the sinner call'd a child;
Then the stubborn heart is tam'd,
Renew'd and reconcil'd.

2 Oh! 'twas grace indeed to spare
And save a wretch like me!
Men or angels could not bear
What I have offer'd thee:
Were thy bolts at their command,
Hell ere now had been my place;
Thou alone could'st silent stand,
And wait to shew thy grace.

3 If, in one created mind,
The tenderness and love
Of thy saints on earth were join'd,
With all the hosts above;
Still that love were weak and poor,
If compar'd, my Lord, with thine;
Far too scanty to endure
A heart so vile as mine.

4 Wondrous mercy I have found,
But, ah! how faint my praise!
Must I be a cumber-ground,
Unfruitful all my days?
Do I in thy garden grow,
Yet produce thee only leaves!
Lord, forbid it should be so!
The thought my spirit grieves.

5 Heavy charges Satan brings,
To fill me with distress;
Let me hide beneath thy wings,
And plead thy righteousness.

Lord, to thee for help I call,
'Tis thy promise bids me come:
Tell him thou hast paid for all,
And that shall strike him dumb.

* Psal. lv. 22. 1 Pet. v. 7.

HYMN LVII.

FOR THE POOR.

1 WHEN Hagar found the bottle spent,*
And wept o'er Ishmael,
A message from the Lord was sent
To guide her to a well.

2 Should not Elijah's cake and cruise†
Convince us at this day,
A gracious God will not refuse
Provisions by the way?

3 His saints and servants shall be fed,
The promise is secure;
"Bread shall be given them," as he said,
"Their water shall be sure."†

4 Repasts far richer they shall prove,
Than all earth's dainties are;
'Tis sweet to taste a Saviour's love,
Though in the meanest fare.

5 To Jesus, then, your trouble bring,
Nor murmur at your lot;
While you are poor, and he is King,
You shall not be forgot.

C.

* Gen. xxi. 19 † 1 Kings xvii. 14.
‡ Isa. xxxiii. 16. § Acts xx. 24.

HYMN LVIII.

HOME IN VIEW.

1 As when the weary trav'ller gains
The height of some o'erlooking hill,
His heart revives, if cross the plains
He eyes his home, though distant still.

2 While he surveys the much-lov'd spot,
He slights the pace that lies between;
His past fatigues are now forgot,
Because his journey's end is seen.

3 Thus, when the christian pilgrim views,
By faith, his mansion in the skies,
The sight his fainting strength renews,
And wings his speed to reach the prize:

4 The thought of home his spirit cheers,
No more he grieves for troubles past;
Nor any future trial fears, §
So he may safe arrive at last.

5 'Tis there, he says, I am to dwell
With Jesus, in the realms of day,
Then I shall bid my cares farewell,
And he will wipe my tears away.

6 Jesus, on thee our hope depends,
To lead us on to thine abode:
Assur'd our home will make amends
For all our toil while on the road.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 4, 7, 9, 11, 25, 35, 36, 39, 41, 46, 47, 48, 70, 95, 128, 132.
Book II. Hymn 45, 46, 47.

V. DEDICATION AND SURRENDER.

HYMN LIX.

OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY.

1 LET worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admir'd its trifles too,
But grace has set me free.

2 Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

3 As by the light of op'ning day
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

4 Creatures no more divide my choice,
I bid them all depart;
His name, and love, and gracious voice,
Have fix'd my roving heart.

5 Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,
And wholly live to thee;
But may I hope that thou wilt own
A worthless worm like me?

6 Yes! though of sinners I'm the worst,
I cannot doubt thy will;
For if thou hadst not lov'd me first,
I had refus'd thee still.*

HYMN LX.

THE POWER OF GRACE.

1 HAPPY the birth where grace presides,
To form the future life;
In wisdom's paths the soul she guides,
Remote from noise and strife.

2 Since I have known the Saviour's name,
And what for me he bore,
No more I toil for empty fame,
I thirst for gold no more.

3 Plac'd by his hand in this retreat,
I make his love my theme;
And see that all the world calls great,
Is but a waking dream.

4 Since he has rank'd my worthless name
Amongst his favour'd few,
Let the mad world who scoff at them,
Revile and hate me too.

5 O thou, whose voice the dead can raise,
And soften hearts of stone,
And teach the dumb to sing thy praise!
This work is all thine own.

6 Thy wond'ring saints rejoice to see
A wretch like me restor'd;
And point, and say, "How chang'd is he
Who once defied the Lord!"

7 Grace bid me live, and taught my tongue
To aim at notes divine;
And grace accepts my feeble song:
The glory, Lord, be thine!

HYMN LXI.

MY SOUL THIRSTETH FOR GOD.

1 I THIRST, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

2 It was the sight of thy dear cross,
First wean'd my soul from earthly things
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

3 I want that grace that springs from thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me,
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.

4 Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream!

* Jer. xxxi 3.

5 For sure, of all the plants that share
The notice of thy Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to his care,
Or yields him meaner fruit than I.

C.

HYMN LXII.

LOVE CONSTRAINING TO OBEDIENCE.

1 No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright;
And what she has, she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

2 How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toil'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.

3 Then, to abstain from outward sin
Was more than I could do;
Now, I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

4 Then all my servile works were done
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.

5 What shall I do, was then the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now.

6 To see the law by Christ fulfill'd,
And hear his pard'ning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,*
And duty into choice.

C.

HYMN LXIII.

THE HEART HEALED AND CHANGED BY MERCY.

1 Sin enslav'd me many years,
And led me bound and blind;
Till at length a thousand fears
Came swarming o'er my mind.
Where, I said in deep distress,
Will these sinful pleasures end?
How shall I secure my peace,
And make the Lord my friend?

2 Friends and ministers said much
The gospel to enforce;
But my blindness still was such,
I chose a legal course:
Much I fasted, watch'd, and strove,
Scarce would shew my face abroad
Fear'd, almost, to speak or move,
A stranger still to God.

3 Thus, afraid to trust his grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till, despairing of my case,
Down at his feet I fell:
Then my stubborn heart he broke,
And subdued me to his sway,
By a simple word he spoke,
"Thy sins are done away."

C.

HYMN LXIV.

HATRED OF SIN.

1 Holy Lord God! I love thy truth,
Nor dare thy least commandment slight.
Yet pierc'd by sin, the serpent's tooth,
I mourn the anguish of the bite.

2 But though the poison lurks within,
Hope bids me still with patience wait,
Till death shall set me free from sin,
Free from the only thing I hate.

3 Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell,
One sin, unslain, within my breast,
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.

4 The pris'ner, sent to breathe fresh air,
And bless'd with liberty again,
Would mourn, were he condemn'd to wear
One link of all his former chain.

5 But, oh! no foe invades the bliss,
When glory crowns the christian's head;
One view of Jesus as he is,
Will strike all sin for ever dead.

C.

HYMN LXV.

THE CHILD.*

1 Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild,
Upright, simple, free from art,
Make me as a weaned child:
From distrust and envy free,
Pleas'd with all that pleases thee.

2 What thou shalt to-day provide,
Let me as a child receive;
What to-morrow may betide,
Calmly to thy wisdom leave:
'Tis enough that thou wilt care,
Why should I the burden bear?

3 As a little child relies
On a care beyond his own;
Knows he's neither strong nor wise;
Fears to stir a step alone:
Let me thus with thee abide,
As my Father, guard, and guide.

* Rom. iii. 31.

* Psal. cxxxi. 2.; Matth. xviii. 3, 4.

4 Thus preserv'd from Satan's wiles,
Safe from dangers, free from fears,
May I live upon thy smiles,
Till the promis'd hour appears,
When the sons of God shall prove
All their Father's boundless love.

HYMN LXVI.

TRUE HAPPINESS.

1 Fix my heart and eyes on thine!
What are other objects worth?
But to see thy glory shine
Is a heaven begun on earth:
Trifles can no longer move;
Oh! I tread on all beside,
When I feel my Saviour's love,
And remember how he died!

2 Now my search is at an end,
Now my wishes rove no more!
Thus my moments I would spend,
Love, and wonder, and adore:
Jesus, source of excellence!
All thy glorious love reveal!
Kingdoms shall not bribe me hence,
While this happiness I feel.

3 Take my heart, 'tis all thine own,
To thy will my spirit frame;
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone,
Over all I have or am:
If a foolish thought shall dare
To rebel against thy word,
Slay it, Lord, and do not spare,
Let it feel thy Spirit's sword!

4 Making thus the Lord my choice,
I have nothing more to choose,
But to listen to thy voice,
And my will in thine to lose:
Thus, whatever may betide,
I shall safe and happy be,
Still content and satisfied,
Having all in having thee.

HYMN LXVII

THE HAPPY DEBTOR.

1 Ten thousand talents once I owed,
And nothing had to pay,
But Jesus freed me from the load,
And wash'd my debt away.

2 Yet since the Lord forgave my sin,
And blotted out my score,
Much more indebted I have been
Than e'er I was before.

3 My guilt is cancell'd quite, I know,
And satisfaction made;
But the vast debt of love I owe
Can never be repaid.

4 The love I owe for sin forgiven,
For power to believe,
For present peace and promis'd heaven,
No angel can conceive.

5 That love of thine, thou sinner's Friend
Witness thy bleeding heart!
My little all can ne'er extend
To pay a thousandth part.

6 Nay more, the poor returns I make,
I first from thee obtain;*
And 'tis of grace, that thou wilt take
Such poor returns again.

7 'Tis well, it shall my glory be
(Let who will boast their store)
In time and to eternity,
To owe thee more and more.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 27, 50, 70, 93, 122.
Book II. Hymn 23, 90.

VI. CAUTIONS.

HYMN LXVIII.

THE NEW CONVERT.

1 The new-born child of gospel-grace,
Like some fair tree when summer's nigh,
Beneath Emmanuel's shining face,
Lifts up his blooming branch on high.

2 No fears he feels, he sees no foes,
No conflict yet his faith employs,
Nor has he learnt to whom he owes
The strength and peace his soul enjoys

* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

3 But sin soon darts its cruel sting,
And comforts sinking day by day,
What seem'd his own, a self-fed spring,
Proves but a brook that glides away.

4 When Gideon arm'd his num'rous host,
The Lord soon made his numbers less;
And said, lest Israel vainly boast,*
"My arm procur'd me thus success."

5 Thus will he bring our spirits down,
And draw our ebbing comforts low,
That, sav'd by grace, but not our own,
We may not claim the praise we owe.

C

HYMN LXIX.

TRUE AND FALSE COMFORTS.

1 O GOD, whose favourable eye
The sin-sick soul revives,
Holy and heavenly is the joy
Thy shining presence gives:

2 Not such as hypocrites suppose,
Who with a graceless heart,
Taste not of thee, but drink a dose,
Prepar'd by Satan's art.

3 Intoxicating joys are theirs,
Who, while they boast their light,
And seem to soar above the stars,
Are plunging into night.

4 Lull'd in a soft and fatal sleep,
They sin, and yet rejoice;
Were they indeed the Saviour's sheep,
Would they not hear his voice?

5 Be mine the comforts that reclaim
The soul from Satan's power,
That make me blush for what I am,
And hate my sin the more.

6 'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.

C

HYMN LXX.

TRUE AND FALSE ZEAL.

1 ZEAL is that pure and heavenly flame
The fire of love supplies;
While that which often bears the name
Is self in a disguise.

2 True zeal is merciful and mild,
Can pity and forbear;
The false is headstrong, fierce, and wild,
And breathes revenge and war.

3 While zeal for truth the christian warms,
He knows the worth of peace;
But self contends for names and forms,
Its party to increase.

4 Zeal has attain'd its highest aim,
Its end is satisfied,
If sinners love the Saviour's name,
Nor seeks it aught beside.

5 But self, however well employed,
Has its own ends in view,
And says, as boasting Jehu cried,*
"Come, see what I can do."

6 Self may its poor reward obtain,
And be applauded here,
But zeal the best applause will gain
When Jesus shall appear.

7 Dear Lord, the idol self dethrone,
And from our hearts remove,
And let no zeal by us be shown
But that which springs from love.

HYMN LXXI.

A LIVING AND A DEAD FAITH.

1 THE Lord receives his highest praise
From humble minds and hearts sincere,
While all the loud professor says
Offends the righteous Judge's ear.

2 To walk as children of the day,
To mark the precepts holy light,
To wage the warfare, watch and pray,
Shew who are pleasing in his sight.

3 Not words alone it cost the Lord,
To purchase pardon for his own;
Nor will a soul, by grace restor'd,
Return the Saviour words alone.

4 With golden bells, the priestly vest,†
And rich pomegranates border'd round,
The need of holiness express'd,
And call'd for fruit as well as sound.

5 Easy, indeed, it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve instead of faith and love.

6 But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign grace,
Unless that grace has made him free.

C

HYMN LXXII.

ABUSE OF THE GOSPEL.

1 TOO many, Lord, abuse thy grace,
In this licentious day;
And while they boast they see thy face,
They turn their own away.

* Judges vii.

* 2 King x. 16. † Exod. xxviii. 33

3 Thy book displays a gracious light,
That can the blind restore;
But these are dazzled by the sight,
And blinded still the more.

4 The pardon such presume upon
They do not beg, but steal;
And when they plead it at thy throne,
Oh! where's the Spirit's seal?

4 Was it for this, ye lawless tribe,
The dear Redeemer bled?
Is this the grace the saints imbibe
From Christ the living Head?

5 Ah! Lord, we know thy chosen few
Are fed with heavenly fare;
But these, the wretched husks they chew,
Proclaim them what they are.

6 The liberty our hearts implore,
Is not to live in sin,
But still to wait at Wisdom's door,
Till Mercy calls us in.

C.

HYMN LXXIII.

THE NARROW WAY.

1 WHAT thousands never knew the road!
What thousands hate it when 'tis known!
None but the chosen tribes of God
Will seek or chuse it for their own.

2 A thousand ways in ruin end,
One only leads to joys on high;
By that my willing steps ascend,
Pleas'd with a journey to the sky.

3 No more I ask, or hope to find
Delight or happiness below;
Sorrow may as well possess the mind
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow.

4 The joy that fades is not for me,
I seek immortal joys above:
There glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love.

5 Cleave to the world, ye sordid worms!
Contented lick your native dust;
But God shall fight, with all his storms,
Against the idol of your trust.

C

HYMN LXXIV.

DEPENDENCE.

1 To keep the lamp alive,
With oil we fill the bowl;
'Tis water makes the willow thrive,
And grace that feeds the soul.

2 The Lord's unsparing hand
Supplies the living stream,
It is not at our own command,
But still deriv'd from him.

3 Beware of Peter's word,*
Nor confidently say,
"I never will deny thee, Lord,"
But grant I never may.

4 Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And ev'n an angel would be weak,
Who trusted in his own.

5 Retreat beneath his wings,
And in his grace confide;
This more exalts the King of kings,†
Than all your works beside.

6 In Jesus is our store,
Grace issues from his throne;
Whoever says, "I want no more,"
Confesses he has none.

C.

HYMN LXXV.

NOT OF WORKS.

1 GRACE, triumphant in the throne,
Scorns a rival, reigns alone!
Come, and bow beneath her sway,
Cast your idol-works away.
Works of man, when made his plea,
Never shall accepted be;
Fruits of pride (vain-glorious worm!)
Are the best he can perform.

2 Self, the god his soul adores,
Influences all his powers;
Jesus is a slighted name,
Self-advancement all his aim,
But when God the Judge shall come,
To pronounce the final doom,
Then for rocks and hills to hide
All his works and all his pride!

3 Still the boasting heart replies,
What! the worthy and the wise,
Friends to temperance and peace,
Have not these a righteousness?
Banish ev'ry vain pretence
Built on human excellence;
Perish ev'ry thing in man,
But the grace that never can.

C.

HYMN LXXVI.

SIN'S DECEIT.

1 SIN, when view'd by scripture-light,
Is a horrid, hateful sight;
But when seen in Satan's glass,
Then it wears a pleasing face.

2 When the gospel-trumpet sounds,
When I think how grace abounds,
When I feel sweet peace within,
Then I'd rather die than sin.

* Matth. xxvi. 33. † John vi. 29.

3 When the cross I view by faith,
Sin is madness, poison, death;
Tempt me not, 'tis all in vain,
Sure I ne'er can yield again.

4 Satan, for a while debarr'd,
When he finds me off my guard,
Puts his glass before my eyes,
Quickly other thoughts arise.

5 What before excited fears,
Rather pleasing now appears;
If a sin, it seems so small,
Or, perhaps, no sin at all.

6 Often thus, through sin's deceit,
Grief, and shame, and loss I meet;
Like a fish, my soul mistook,
Saw the bait, but not the hook.

7 O my Lord! what shall I say?
How can I presume to pray?
Not a word have I to plead,
Sins like mine are black indeed!

8 Made by past experience wise,
Let me learn thy word to prize;
Taught by what I've felt before,
Let me Satan's glass abhor.

HYMN LXXVII.

ARE THERE FEW THAT SHALL BE SAVED?

1 DESTRUCTION'S dang'rous road,
What multitudes pursue!
While that which leads the soul to God,
Is known or sought by few.

2 Believers enter in
By Christ, the living gate:
But they who will not leave their sin,
Complain it is too strait.

3 If self must be denied,
And sin forsaken quite,
They rather chuse the way that's wide,
And strive to think it right.

4 Encompass'd by a throng,
On numbers they depend;
So many surely can't be wrong,
And miss a happy end.

5 But numbers are no mark
That men will right be found,
A few were sav'd in Noah's ark,*
For many millions drown'd.

6 Obey the gospel-call,
And enter while you may!
The flock of Christ is always small,†
And none are safe but they.

7 Lord, open sinners eyes,
Their awful state to see;
And make them ere the storm arise,
To thee for safety flee.

* 1 Pet. iii. 20. † Luke xii. 32.

HYMN LXXVIII.

THE SLUGGARD.

1 THE wishes that the sluggard frames,*
Of course must fruitless prove;
With folded arms he stands and dreams,
But has no heart to move.

2 His field from others may be known,
The fence is broken through;
The ground with weeds is overgrown,
And no good crop in view.

3 No hardship he, nor toil, can bear,
No difficulty meet;
He wastes his hours at home, for fear
Of lions in the street.

4 What wonder, then, if sloth and sleep
Distress and famine bring!
Could he in harvest hope to reap,
Who would not sow in spring?

5 'Tis often thus in soul-concerns:
We gospel-sluggards see,
Who, if a wish would serve their turns,
Might true believers be.

6 But when the preacher bids them watch,
And seek, and strive, and pray,†
At ev'ry poor excuse they catch,
A lion in the way!

7 To use the means of grace, how loth!
We call them still in vain;
They yield to their beloved sloth,
And fold their arms again.

8 Dear Saviour, let thy power appear,
The outward call to aid;
These drowsy souls can only hear
The voice that wakes the dead

HYMN LXXIX.

NOT IN WORD, BUT IN POWER.

1 HOW soon the Saviour's gracious call,
Disarm'd the rage of bloody Saul!‡
Jesus, the knowledge of thy name,
Changes the lion to a lamb!

2 Zaccheus, when he knew the Lord,§
What he had gain'd by wrong, restor'd;
And of the wealth he priz'd before,
He gave the half to feed the poor.

3 The woman who so vile had been, ‖
When brought to weep o'er pardon'd sin,
Was from her evil ways estrang'd,
And shew'd that grace her heart chang'd.

* Prov. vi. 10.; xx. 4.; xxii. 13.; xxiv. 30.
† 1 Cor. ix. 24.; Luke xiii. 24. ‡ Acts ix. 6
§ Luke xix. 8. ‖ Luke vii. 47

4 And can we think the power of grace
Is lost, by change of time and place?
Then it was mighty, all allow,
And is it but a notion now?

5 Can they whom pride and fashion sway,
Who Mammon and the world obey,
In envy or contention live,
Presume that they indeed believe?

6 True faith unites to Christ the root,
By him producing holy fruit;
And they who no such fruit can show,
Still on the stock of nature grow.

7 Lord, let thy word effectual prove,
To work in us obedient love!
And may each one who hears it, dread
A name to live, and yet be dead.*

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 8, 20, 85, 87, 91, 104, 125, 139, 141.
Book II. Hymn 34, 49, 86, 91, 99.

VII. PRAISE.

HYMN LXXX.

PRAISE FOR FAITH.

1 Of all the gifts thine hand bestows,
Thou giver of all good!
Not heaven itself a richer knows,
Than my Redeemer's blood.

2 Faith, too, the blood-receiving grace,
From the same hand we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
That gift had been in vain.

3 Till thou thy teaching power apply,
Our hearts refuse to see,
And weak, as a distemper'd eye,
Shut out the view of thee.

4 Blind to the merits of thy Son,
What misery we endure!
Yet fly that hand, from which alone
We could expect a cure.

5 We praise thee, and would praise thee more,
To thee our all we owe;
The precious Saviour and the power
That makes him precious too.

C.

HYMN LXXXI.

GRACE AND PROVIDENCE.

1 Almighty King! whose wondrous hand
Supports the weight of sea and land,
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more.

2 Thy providence supplies my food,
And 'tis thy blessing makes it good;
My soul is nourish'd by thy word,
Let soul and body praise the Lord.

3 My streams of outward comfort came
From him, who built this earthly frame;
Whate'er I want his bounty gives,
By whom my soul for ever lives.

4 Either his hand preserves from pain,
Or, if I feel it, heals again;
From Satan's malice shields my breast,
Or over-rules it for the best.

5 Forgive the song that falls so low
Beneath the gratitude I owe!
It means thy praise, however poor,
An angel's song can do no more.

C.

HYMN LXXXII.

PRAISE FOR REDEEMING LOVE.

1 Let us love, and sing and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name!
He has hush'd the law's loud thunder,
He has quench'd Mount Sinai's flame:
He has wash'd us with his blood,
He has brought us nigh to God.

2 Let us love—the Lord who bought us,
Pitied us when enemies,
Call'd us by his grace, and taught us,
Gave us ears, and gave us eyes:
He has wash'd us with his blood,
He presents our souls to God.

3 Let us sing,—though fierce temptations
Threaten hard to bear us down;
For the Lord, our strong salvation,
Holds in view the conq'ror's crown:*
He who wash'd us with his blood
Soon will bring us home to God.

* Rev. iii. 1.

4 Let us wonder,—grace and justice
Join, and point to mercy's store!
When through grace in Christ our trust is,
Justice smiles, and asks no more:
He who wash'd us with his blood,
Has secur'd our way to God.

5 Let us praise,—and join the chorus
Of the saints enthron'd on high;
Here they trusted him before us,
Now their praises fill the sky:*
"Thou hast wash'd us with thy blood;
Thou art worthy, Lamb of God!"

6 Hark, the name of Jesus sounded
Loud from golden harps above!
Lord, we blush, and are confounded,
Faint our praises, cold our love!
Wash our souls and songs with blood,
For by thee we come to God.

HYMN LXXXIII.

I WILL PRAISE THE LORD AT ALL TIMES.

1 WINTER has a joy for me,
While the Saviour's charms I read,
Lowly, meek, from blemish free,
In the snow drop's pensive head.

2 Spring returns, and brings along
Life-invigorating suns;
Hark! the turtle's plaintive song,
Seems to speak his dying groans!

3 Summer has a thousand charms,
All expressive of his worth;
'Tis his sun that lights and warms,
His the air that cools the earth.

4 What! has autumn left to say
Nothing of a Saviour's grace?
Yes, the beams of milder day
Tell me of his smiling face.

5 Light appears with early dawn;
While the sun makes haste to rise,
See his bleeding beauties drawn
On the blushes of the skies.

6 Evening, with a silent pace,
Slowly moving in the west,
Shews an emblem of his grace,
Points to an eternal rest.

C.

HYMN LXXXIV.

PERSEVERANCE.

1 REJOICE, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause his own;
The hope that's built upon his word
Can ne'er be overthrown.

2 Though many foes beset your road,
And feeble is your arm;
Your life is hid with Christ in God,*
Beyond the reach of harm.

3 Weak as you are, you shall not faint,
Or, fainting, shall not die,
Jesus, the strength of ev'ry saint,†
Will aid you from on high.

4 Though sometimes unperceiv'd by sense,
Faith sees him always near,
A guide, a glory, a defence;
Then what have you to fear?

5 As surely as he overcame,
And triumph'd once for you,
So surely you that love his name,
Shall triumph in him too.

HYMN LXXXV.

SALVATION.

1 SALVATION! what a glorious plan,
How suited to our need!
The grace that raises fallen man
Is wonderful indeed!

2 'Twas wisdom form'd the vast design
To ransom us when lost;
And love's unfathomable mine
Provided all the cost.

3 Strict Justice, with approving look,
The holy covenant seal'd;
And Truth and Power undertook
The whole should be fulfill'd.

4 Truth, Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Love
In all their glory shone,
When Jesus left the courts above,
And died to save his own.

5 Truth, Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Love
Are equally displayed;
Now Jesus reigns enthron'd above,
Our Advocate and Head.

6 Now sin appears deserving death,
Most hateful and abhorr'd;
And yet the sinner lives by faith,
And dares approach the Lord.

HYMN LXXXVI.

REIGNING GRACE.

1 NOW, may the Lord reveal his face,
And teach our stamm'ring tongues
To make his sovereign, reigning grace,‡
The subject of our songs!
No sweeter subject can invite
A sinner's heart to sing,
Or more display the glorious right
Of our exalted King.

* Rev.

* Col. iii. 3. † Isa. xl. 29. ‡ Rom. v. 21.

4 This subject fills the starry plains
With wonder, joy, and love;
And furnishes the noblest strains
For all the harps above:
While the redeem'd in praise combine
To grace upon the throne,*
Angels in solemn chorus join,
And make the theme their own.

5 Grace reigns to pardon crimson sins,
To melt the hardest hearts;
And from the work it once begins,†
It never more departs.
The world and Satan strive in vain
Against the chosen few;‡
Secur'd by grace's conqu'ring reign,
They all shall conquer too.

4 Grace tills the soil, and sows the seeds,
Provides the sun and rain;
Till from the tender blade proceeds
The ripen'd harvest-grain.
'Twas grace that call'd our souls at first;
By grace thus far we're come;
And grace will help us through the worst,
And lead us safely home.

5 Lord, when this changing life is past,
If we may see thy face,
How shall we praise and love at last,
And sing the reign of grace! ‖
Yet let us aim, while here below,
Thy mercy to display;
And own, at least, the debt we owe,
Although we cannot pay.

HYMN LXXXVII.

PRAISE TO THE REDEEMER.

1 PREPARE a thankful song
To the Redeemer's name!
His praises should employ each tongue,
And ev'ry heart inflame!

2 He laid his glory by,
And dreadful pains endur'd,
That rebels, such as you and I,
From wrath might be secur'd.

3 Upon the cross he died,
Our debt of sin to pay;
The blood and water from his side
Wash guilt and filth away.

4 And now he pleading stands,
For us, before the throne,
And answers all the law's demands
With what himself hath done.

5 He sees us, willing slaves,
To sin, and Satan's power;
But, with an outstretch'd arm, he saves,
In his appointed hour.

6 The Holy Ghost he sends,
Our stubborn souls to move,
To make his enemies his friends,
And conquer them by love.

7 The love of sin departs,
The life of grace takes place,
Soon as his voice invites our hearts
To rise and seek his face.

8 The world and Satan rage,
But he their power controls;
His wisdom, love, and truth, engage
Protection for our souls.

9 Though press'd, we will not yield,
But shall prevail at length:
For Jesus is our sun and shield,
Our righteousness and strength.

10 Assur'd that Christ, our King,
Will put our foes to flight,
We on the field of battle sing,
And triumph while we fight.

HYMN LXXXVIII.

MAN, BY NATURE, GRACE, AND GLORY.

1 LORD, what is man! extremes how wide
In this mysterious nature join!
The flesh, to worms and dust allied,
The soul, immortal and divine!

2 Divine at first, a holy flame,
Kindled by the Almighty's breath;
Till, stain'd by sin, it soon became
The seat of darkness, strife, and death.

3 But Jesus, oh! amazing grace!
Assum'd our nature as his own,
Obeyed and suffer'd in our place,
Then took it with him to his throne.

4 Now, what is man, when grace reveals
The virtue of a Saviour's blood!
Again a life divine he feels,
Despises earth, and walks with God.

5 And what, in yonder realms above,
Is ransom'd man ordain'd to be!
With honour, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorn'd than he.

6 Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise;
While wond'ring angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 57, 58, 59, 79, 80.
Book II. Hymn 37, 38, 39, 41 42.

* Rev. v. 9, 12.
† Phil. i. 6.
‡ Rom. viii. 35—39.
‖ Psal. cxv. 1.

VIII. SHORT HYMNS.

BEFORE SERMON.

HYMN LXXXIX.

CONFIRM the hope thy word allows,
Behold us waiting to be fed;
Bless the provision of thy house,
And satisfy thy poor with bread:
Drawn by thine invitation, Lord,
Athirst and hungry we are come;
Now, from the fulness of thy word,
Feast us, and send us thankful home.

HYMN XC.

1 NOW, Lord, inspire the preacher's heart,
And teach his tongue to speak;
Food to the hungry soul impart,
And cordials to the weak.

2 Furnish us all with light and powers
To walk in Wisdom's ways;
So shall the benefit be ours,
And thou shalt have the praise.

HYMN XCI.

1 THY promise, Lord, and thy command,
Have brought us here to-day;
And now, we humbly waiting stand,
To hear what thou wilt say.*

2 Meet us, we pray, with words of peace,
And fill our hearts with love;
That from our follies we may cease,
And henceforth faithful prove.

HYMN XCII.

1 HUNGRY, and faint, and poor,
Behold us, Lord, again
Assembled at thy mercy's door,
Thy bounty to obtain.

2 Thy word invites us nigh,
Or we must starve indeed;
For we no money have to buy,
No righteousness to plead.

3 The food our spirits want
Thy hand alone can give;
Oh! hear the prayer of faith, and grant
That we may eat and live.

HYMN XCIII.

PSAL. cvi. 4, 5.

1 REMEMBER us, we pray thee, Lord,
With those who love thy gracious name.
And to our souls that good afford,
Thy promise has prepar'd for the

2 To us thy great salvation show
Give us a taste of love divine,
That we thy people's joy may know
And in their holy triumph join.

HYMN XCIV.

1 NOT to Sinai's dreadful blaze,*
But to Zion's throne of grace,
By a way mark'd out with blood.
Sinners now approach to God

2 Not to hear the fiery law,
But with humble joy to draw
Water, by that well supplied,†
Jesus open'd when he died.

3 Lord, there are no streams but thine
Can assuage a thirst like mine:
'Tis a thirst thyself didst give,
Let me, therefore, drink and live.

HYMN XCV.

1 OFTEN thy public means of grace,
Thy thirsty people's wat'ring place,
The archers have beset:‡
Attack'd them in thy house of prayer,
To prison dragg'd, or to the bar,
When thus together met.

2 But we from such assaults are freed,
Can pray, and sing, and hear, and read

* Psal. lxxxv. 8.

* Heb. xii. 18. 22. † Isa. xii. 3. ‡ Judges v 1.

And meet, and part, in peace:
May we our privileges prize,
In their improvement make us wise,
And bless us with increase.

3 Unless thy presence thou afford,
Unless thy blessing clothe the word,
In vain our liberty!
What would it profit to maintain
A name for life, should we remain
Formal and dead to thee?

AFTER SERMON

HYMN XCVI.

DEUT. xxxiii. 26, 29.

1 WITH Israel's God who can compare?
Or who like Israel happy are?
O people, saved by the Lord,
He is thy shield and great reward!

2 Upheld by everlasting arms,
Thou art secur'd from foes and harms:
In vain their plots, and false their boasts,
Our refuge is the Lord of hosts.

HYMN XCVII.

HABAKKUK iii. 17, 18.

JESUS is mine! I'm now prepar'd
To meet with what I thought most hard:
Yes, let the winds of trouble blow,
And comforts melt away like snow;
No blasted trees or failing crops,
Can hinder my eternal hopes;
Tho' creatures change, the Lord's the same;
Then let me triumph in his name.

HYMN XCVIII

WE seek a rest beyond the skies,
In everlasting day;
Through floods and flames the passage lies,
But Jesus guards the way:
The swelling flood, and raging flame,
Hear and obey his word;
Then let us triumph in his name,
Our Saviour is the Lord.

HYMN XCIX.

DEUT. xxxii. 9, 10.

1 THE saints Emmanuel's portion are,
Redeem'd by price, reclaim'd by power;
His special choice, and tender care,
Owns them and guards them ev'ry hour

2 He finds them in a barren land,
Beset with sins, and fears, and woes;
He leads and guides them by his hand,
And bears them safe from all their foes.

HYMN C.

HEB. xiii. 20—24.

1 NOW may he who from the dead
Brought the Shepherd of the sheep,
Jesus Christ, our King and Head,
All our souls in safety keep!

2 May he teach us to fulfil
What is pleasing in his sight;
Perfect us in all his will,
And preserve us day and night!

3 To that dear Redeemer's praise,
Who the covenant seal'd with blood,
Let our hearts and voices raise
Loud thanksgivings to our God.

HYMN CI.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

MAY the grace of Christ our Saviour
And the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favour,
Rest upon us from above!
Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord;
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth cannot afford.

HYMN CII.

THE peace which God alone reveals,
And by his word of grace imparts,
Which only the believer feels,*
Direct and keep, and cheer your hearts
And may the Holy Three in one,
The Father, Word, and Comforter,
Pour an abundant blessing down
On ev'ry soul assembled here!

HYMN CIII.

1 To thee our wants are known,
From thee are all our powers;
Accept what is thine own,
And pardon what is ours:
Our praises, Lord, and prayers receive,
And to thy word a blessing give.

* Phil. iv. 7.

2 O grant that each of us
Now met before thee here,
May meet together thus,
When thou and thine appear!
And follow thee to heaven our home.
Ev'n so, Amen! Lord Jesus, come!*

GLORIA PATRI.

HYMN CIV.

1 THE Father we adore,
And everlasting Son,
The Spirit of his love and power,
The glorious Three in One.

2 At the creation's birth
This song was sung on high,
Shall sound, through ev'ry age, on earth,
And through eternity.

HYMN CV.

1 FATHER of angels and of men,
Saviour, who hast us bought,
Spirit, by whom we're born again,
And sanctified and taught!

2 Thy glory, holy Three in One,
Thy people's song shall be;
Long as the wheels of time shall run,
And to eternity.

HYMN CVI.

1 GLORY to God the Father's name,
To Jesus, who for sinners died;
The Holy Spirit claims the same,
By whom our souls are sanctified.

2 Thy praise was sung, when time began,
By angels, through the starry spheres:
And shall, as now, be sung by man,
Through vast eternity's long years.

HYMN CVII.

YE saints on earth, ascribe, with heaven's high host,
Glory and honour to the One in Three:
To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
As was, and is, and evermore shall be

POEMS.

THE KITE;

OR

PRIDE MUST HAVE A FALL.

My waking dreams are best conceal'd,
Much folly, little good, they yield;
But now and then, I gain, when sleeping,
A friendly hint that's worth the keeping.
Lately I dreamt of one who cried,
"Beware of self, beware of pride;
When you are prone to build a Babel,
Recal to mind this little fable."

ONCE on a time a paper kite
Was mounted to a wond'rous height,
Where, giddy with its elevation,
It thus express'd self-admiration:
"See how yon crowds of gazing people
Admire my flight above the steeple:
How would they wonder if they knew
All that a kite like me can do!
Were I but free, I'd take a flight,
And pierce the clouds beyond their sight;
But, ah! like a poor pris'ner bound,
My string confines me near the ground:
I'd brave the eagle's towering wing,
Might I but fly without a string."
It tugg'd and pull'd, while thus it spoke,
To break the string:—at last it broke.
Depriv'd at once of all its stay,
In vain it tried to soar away;
Unable its own weight to bear,
It flutter'd downward through the air;
Unable its own course to guide,
The winds soon plung'd it in the tide.
Ah! foolish kite, thou hadst no wing,
How couldst thou fly without a string?
Hy heart replied, "O Lord, I see
How much this kite resembles me!
Forgetful that by thee I stand,
Impatient of thy ruling hand;
How oft I've wish'd to break the lines
Thy wisdom for my lot assigns?
How oft indulg'd a vain desire,
For something more or something higher?
And, but for grace and love divine,
A fall thus dreadful had been mine."

A THOUGHT ON THE SEA-SHORE.

In ev'ry object here I see
Something, O Lord, that leads to thee:
Firm as the rocks thy promise stands,
Thy mercies countless as the sands,
Thy love a sea immensely wide,
Thy grace an ever-flowing tide.

In ev'ry object here I see
Something, my heart, that points at thee:
Hard as the rocks that bound the strand,
Unfruitful as the barren sand,
Deep and deceitful as the ocean,
And, like the tide, in constant motion

THE SPIDER AND THE TOAD.

SOME author (no great matter who,
Provided what he says be true)
Relates he saw, with hostile rage,
A spider and a toad engage;
For though with poison both are stor'd,
Each by the other is abhorr'd:
It seems as if their common venom
Provok'd an enmity between 'em.
Implacable, malicious, cruel,
Like modern hero in a duel,
The spider darted on his foe,
Infixing death at ev'ry blow.
The toad, by ready instinct taught,
An antidote, when wounded, sought,
From the herb plantane, growing near,
Well-known to toads, its virtues rare
The spider's poison to repel;
It cropp'd the leaf and soon was well.
This remedy it often tried,
And all the spider's rage defied.
The person who the contest viewed,
While yet the battle doubtful stood,
Remov'd the healing plant away,
And thus the spider gain'd the day;
For when the toad returned once more,
Wounded, as it had done before,
To seek relief, and found it not,
It swell'd and died upon the spot.
In ev'ry circumstance but one
(Could that hold too, I were undone!)
No glass can represent my face
More justly than this tale my case.
The toad's an emblem of my heart,
And Satan acts the spider's part.
Envenom'd by his poison, I
Am often at the point to die;
But he who hung upon the tree,
From guilt and woe to set me free,
Is like the plantane leaf to me.
To him my wounded soul repairs,
He knows my pain and hears my prayers
From him I virtue draw by faith,
Which saves me from the jaws of death:
From him fresh life and strength I gain,
And Satan spends his rage in vain.
No secret arts or open force
Can rob me of this sure resource:
Though banish'd to some distant land,
My med'cine would be still at hand·
Though foolish men its worth deny,
Experience gives them all the lie;
Though Deists and Socinians join,
Jesus still lives, and still is mine.
'Tis here the happy difference lies,
My Saviour reigns above the skies,
Yet to my soul is always near,
For he is God and everywhere.
His blood a sovereign balm is found
For ev'ry grief and ev'ry wound;
And sooner all the hills shall flee
And hide themselves beneath the sea,
Or ocean, starting from its bed,
Rush o'er the cloud-topt mountains head
The sun, exhausted of its light,
Become the source of endless night,
And ruin spread from pole to pole,
Than Jesus fail the tempted soul.

MESSIAH;

OR

FIFTY EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE SERIES OF

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES

WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT OF HANDEL'S CELEBRATED

ORATORIO

OF THAT NAME,

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

LOMBARD STREET,

LONDON

———————— Ah!
Tantamne rem, tam negligenter, agere! TER.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this!—
DEUT xxxii. 29.

TO THE

PARISHIONERS OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

AND

ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,

LONDON,

THESE SERMONS

ON THE

MESSIAH

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE

AUTHOR,

TO REMAIN AS A TESTIMONY OF HIS RESPECT

FOR THEIR PERSONS,

AND HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE,

WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION

TO THEM, AS THEIR MINISTER,

SHALL BE DISSOLVED.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons, as to the substance (for most of them are considerably abridged), were preached to a public and numerous assembly; and therefore an accurate and logical discussion of the several subjects was not aimed at. They are rather popular discourses, in which the Author, though he wished not to treat the politer part of his auditory with disrespect, thought it likewise his duty so to adapt his manner to the occasion, as to be intelligible to persons of weak capacities and in the lower ranks of life. He conceives himself to be a debtor to every class of his hearers, and that he ought to endeavour to please all men, with a view to their edification; but, farther than this, not to be greatly affected, either by their approbation or by their censure.

Many of the subjects are so nearly coincident, that repetitions could not be always avoided, without the appearance of affectation. Besides, as it may be expected that, in a large congregation, there are always some persons present for the first time,—with respect to these, an observation may be new, though perhaps the more stated hearers may recollect its having been mentioned before. For a similar reason, such repetitions are not improper in print. Many persons read part of a book, who may not have opportunity or inclination to read the whole. Should any one, by opening these Sermons at a venture, meet with a passage which, by a divine blessing, may either awaken a careless, or heal a wounded spirit, that passage will be exactly in the right page, even though the purport of it should be expressed in several other places. Farther, since we do not always so much stand in need of new information, as to have what we already know more effectually impressed upon the mind, there are truths which can scarcely be inculcated too often, at least until the design for which they were mentioned once be effectually answered. Thus, when the strokes of a hammer are often repeated, not one of them can be deemed superfluous; the last, which drives the nail to the head, being no less necessary than any of those which preceded it.

From those readers, whose habits of thinking on religious subjects are formed by a close attachment to particular systems of divinity, the Author requests a candid construction of what he advances, if he ventures in some instances to deviate a little from the more beaten track. If he is sometimes constrained to differ from the judgment of wise and good men, who have deserved well of the church of God, he would do it with modesty: far from depreciating their labours, he would be thankful for the benefit which he hopes he has received from them. It is a great satisfaction to him, that in all doctrinal points of primary importance, his views are confirmed by the suffrage of writers and ministers eminent for genuine piety and sound learning, who assisted him in his early inquiries after truth, and at whose feet he is still

willing to sit. Yet, remembering that he is authorised and commanded to call no man Master, so as to yield an implicit and unqualified submission to human teachers, while he gladly borrows every help he can from others, he ventures likewise to think for himself. His leading sentiments concerning the grand peculiarities of the gospel were formed many years since, when he was in a state of almost entire seclusion from society,—when he had scarcely any religious book but the Bible within his reach, and had no knowledge, either of the various names, parties, and opinions by which christians were distinguished and divided, or the controversies which subsisted among them He is not conscious that any very material difference has taken place in his sentiments since he first became acquainted with the religious world; but, after a long course of experience and observation, he seems to possess them in a different manner. The difficulties which for a season perplexed him on some points, are either removed or considerably abated. On the other hand, he now perceives difficulties that constrain him to lay his hand upon his mouth, in subjects which once appeared to him obvious and plain. Thus, if he mistakes not himself, he is less troubled with scepticism, and at the same time less disposed to be dogmatical, than he formerly was. He feels himself unable to draw the line with precision between those essential points which ought to be earnestly contended for (in a spirit of meekness), as for the faith once delivered to the saints, and certain secondary positions, concerning which good men may safely differ, and wherein, perhaps, we cannot reasonably expect them to be unanimous during the present state of imperfection. But if the exact boundary cannot be marked with certainty, he thinks it both desirable and possible to avoid the extremes into which men of warm tempers have often been led.

Not that the Author can be an advocate for that indifference to truth which, under the specious semblance of moderation and candour, offers a comprehension, from which none are excluded but those who profess and aim to worship God in the spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to renounce all confidence in the flesh. Moderation is a christian grace; it differs much from that tame, unfeeling neutrality between truth and error which is so prevalent in the present day. As the different rays of light, which, when separated by a prism, exhibit the various colours of the rainbow, form, in their combination, a perfect and resplendent white, in which every colour is incorporated, so, if the graces of the Holy Spirit were complete in us, the result of their combined effect would be a truly candid, moderate, and liberal spirit towards our brethren. The christian, especially he who is advanced and established in the life of faith, has a fervent zeal for God, for the honour of his name, his law, and his gospel. The honest warmth which he feels when such a law is broken, such a gospel is despised, and when the great and glorious name of the Lord his God is profaned, would, by the occasion of his infirmities, often degenerate into anger or contempt towards those who oppose themselves, if he was under the influence of zeal only. But his zeal is blended with benevolence and humility; it is softened by a consciousness of his own frailty and fallibility. He is aware that his knowledge is very limited in itself, and very faint in its efficacy; that his attainments are weak and few compared with his deficiencies; that his gratitude is very disproportionate to his obligations, and his obedience unspeakably short of conformity to his prescribed rule; that he has nothing but what he has received, and has received nothing but what, in a greater or less degree, he has misapplied and misimproved. He is therefore a debtor to the mercy of God, and lives upon his multiplied forgiveness; and he makes the gracious conduct of the Lord towards himself a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-creatures.

He cannot boast, nor is he forward to censure. He considers himself, lest he also be tempted (Gal. vi. 1); and thus he learns tenderness and compassion to others, and to bear patiently with those mistakes, prejudices, and prepossessions in them, which once belonged to his own character, and from which, as yet, he is but imperfectly freed. But then, the same considerations which inspire him with meekness and gentleness towards those who oppose the truth, strengthen his regard for the truth itself, and his conviction of its importance. For the sake of peace, which he loves and cultivates, he accommodates himself, as far as he lawfully can, to the weakness and misapprehensions of those who mean well, though he is thereby exposed to the censure of bigots of all parties, who deem him flexible and wavering, like a reed shaken with the wind. But there are other points nearly connected with the honour of God, and essential to the life of faith, which are the foundations of his hope and the sources of his joy. For his firm attachment to these, he is content to be treated as a bigot himself; for here he is immoveable as an iron pillar, nor can either the fear or the favour of man prevail on him to give place, no not for an hour, Gal. ii. 5. Here his judgment is fixed, and he expresses it in simple and unequivocal language, so as not to leave either friends or enemies in suspense concerning the side which he has chosen, or the cause which is nearest to his heart.

The minister who possesses a candour thus enlightened and thus qualified, will neither degrade himself to be the instrument, nor aspire to be the head of a party. He will not servilely tread in the paths prescribed him by men, however respectable. He will not multiply contentions, in defence either of the shibboleths of others, or of any nostrum of his own, under a pretence that he is pleading for the cause of God and truth. His attention will not be restrained to the credit or interest of any detached denomination of christians, but extended to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. On the other hand, knowing that the gospel is the wisdom and power of God, and the only possible mean by which fallen man can obtain either peace or rectitude, he most cordially embraces and avows it. Far from being ashamed of it, he esteems it his glory. He preaches Christ Jesus the Lord, and him crucified. He dares not sophisticate (2 Cor. iv. 2), disguise, or soften the great doctrines of the grace of God, to render them more palatable to the depraved taste of the times. He disdains the thought; and he will no more encounter the prejudices and corrupt maxims and practices of the world with any weapon but the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. iv. 21), than he would venture to fight an enraged enemy with a wooden sword.

Such is the disposition which the Author wishes for himself, and which he would endeavour to cultivate in others. He hopes that nothing of a contrary tendency will be found in the volumes* now presented to the public. Messiah, the great subject of the Oratorio, is the leading and principal subject of every sermon. His person, grace, and glory; his matchless love to sinners, his humiliation, sufferings, and death; his ability and willingness to save to the uttermost; his kingdom, and the present and future happiness of his willing people are severally considered, according to the order suggested by the series of texts. Nearly connected with these topics are the doctrines of the fall and depravity of man, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the nature and necessity of regeneration, and of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. On these subjects the Author is not afraid of contradiction from those who are taught of God.

With respect to some other points which incidentally occur, he has endea-

* These Sermons were originally printed in two volumes.

voured so to treat them as to avoid administering fuel to the flame of angry controversy. He is persuaded himself, and shall be happy to persuade his readers, that the remaining differences of opinion among those who truly understand and cordially believe the declarations of scripture on the preceding articles, are neither so wide nor so important as they have been sometimes represented. Many of these differences are nearly verbal, and would cease, if due allowance was made for the imperfection of human language, and the effects of an accustomed phraseology, which often lead people to affix different ideas to the same expressions, or to express the same ideas in different words. And if, in some things, we cannot exactly agree, since we confess that we are all weak and fallible, mutual patience and forbearance would be equally becoming the acknowledgments we make and the gospel which we profess. We should thereby act in character, as the followers of him who was compassionate to the infirmities and mistakes of his disciples, and taught them not every thing at once, but gradually, as they were able to bear.

The Author ought not to be very solicitous upon his own account, what reception his performance may meet with. The fashion of this world is passing away. The voice, both of applause and of censure, will soon be stifled in the dust. It is therefore but a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3. But conscious of the vast importance of the subject which he thus puts into the reader's hands, he cannot take leave of him without earnestly entreating his serious attention. The one principle which he assumes for granted, and which he is certain cannot be disproved, is, That the Bible is a revelation from God. By this standard he is willing that whatever he has advanced may be tried. If the Bible be true, we must all give an account, each one of himself, to the great and final Judge. That, when we shall appear before his awful tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, accepted in the Beloved, is the Author's fervent prayer, both for his readers and for himself.

London, 15th April, 1766.

MESSIAH, &c.

SERMON I.

THE CONSOLATION.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.—ISAIAH, xl. 1, 2.

THE particulars of the great mystery of godliness, as enumerated by the apostle Paul, constitute the grand and inexhaustible theme of the gospel ministry: "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," 1 Tim. iii. 16. It is my wish and purpose to know nothing among you but this subject; to preach nothing to you but what has a real connection with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and with the causes and effects of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But a regard to the satisfaction and advantage of my stated hearers, has often made me desirous of adopting some plan, which might lead me to exhibit the principal outlines of the Saviour's character and mediation in a regular series of discourses, so as to form, if not a picture, at least a slight sketch, of those features of his glory and of his grace which endear him to the hearts of his people. Such a plan has lately, and rather unexpectedly, occurred to me. Conversation in almost every company, for some time past, has much turned upon the commemoration of Handel; the grand musical entertainments, and particularly his Oratorio of the Messiah, which have been repeatedly performed on that occasion in Westminster Abbey. If it could be reasonably hoped, that the performers and the company assembled to hear the music, or the greater part, or even a considerable part of them, were capable of entering into the spirit of the subject, I will readily allow that the Messiah, executed in so masterly a manner, by persons whose hearts, as well as their voices and instruments, were tuned to the Redeemer's praise; accompanied with the grateful emotions of an audience duly affected with a sense of their obligations to his love; might afford one of the highest and noblest gratifications of which we are capable in the present life. But they who love the Redeemer, and therefore delight to join in his praise, if they did not find it convenient, or think it expedient, to hear the Messiah at Westminster, may comfort themselves with the thought, that, in a little time, they shall be still more abundantly gratified. Ere long death shall rend the vail which hides eternal things from their view, and introduce them to that unceasing song and universal chorus, which are even now performing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Till then, I apprehend, that true christians, without the assistance of either vocal or instrumental music, may find greater pleasure in a humble contemplation on the words of the Messiah, than they can derive from the utmost efforts of musical genius. This, therefore, is the plan I spoke of. I mean to lead your meditations to the language of the Oratorio, and to consider in their order (if the Lord, on whom

our breath depends, shall be pleased to afford life, ability, and opportunity) the several sublime and interesting passages of scripture which are the basis of that admired composition.

If he shall condescend to smile upon the attempt, pleasure and profit will go hand in hand. There is no harmony to a heaven-born soul like that which is the result of the combination and coincidence of all the divine attributes and perfections, manifested in the work of redemption; mercy and truth meeting together, inflexible righteousness corresponding with the peace of offenders, God glorious, and sinners saved. There is no melody upon earth to be compared with the voice of the blood of Jesus, speaking peace to a guilty conscience, or with the voice of the Holy Spirit, applying the promises to the heart, and sweetly inspiring a temper of confidence and adoption. These are joys which the world can neither give nor take away, which never pall upon the mind by continuance or repetition; the sense of them is always new, the recollection of them is always pleasant. Nor do they only satisfy, but sanctify the soul. They strengthen faith, animate hope, add fervency to love, and both dispose and enable the christian to run in all the paths of holy obedience with an enlarged heart.

The Messiah of Handel consists of three parts. The first contains prophecies of his advent, and the happy consequences, together with the angel's message to the shepherds, informing them of his birth, as related by St. Luke. The second part describes his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension; his taking possession of his kingdom of glory, the commencement of his kingdom of grace upon earth, and the certain disappointment and ruin of all who persist in opposition to his will. The third part expresses the blessed fruits and consummation of his undertaking, in the deliverance of his people from sin, sorrow, and death, and in making them finally victorious over all their enemies. The triumphant song of the redeemed, to the praise of the Lamb, who bought them with his own blood, closes the whole. The arrangement or series of these passages is so judiciously disposed, so well connected, and so fully comprehends all the principal truths of the gospel, that I shall not attempt either to alter or to enlarge it. The exordium or introduction, which I have read to you from the prophecy of Isaiah, is very happily chosen.

If, as some eminent commentators suppose, the prophet had any reference, in this passage, to the return of Israel from Babylon into their own land, his principal object was undoubtedly of much greater importance. Indeed, their deliverance from captivity, and their state afterwards as a nation, do not appear to correspond with the magnificent images employed in the following verses; for though they rebuilt their city and temple, they met with many insults and much opposition, and continued to be a tributary and dependent people. I shall therefore waive the consideration of this sense.

The eye of the prophet's mind seems to be chiefly fixed upon one august personage, who was approaching to enlighten and bless a miserable world; and before he describes the circumstances of his appearance, he is directed to comfort the mourners in Zion, with an assurance, that this great event would fully compensate them for all their sorrows. The state of Jerusalem, the representative name of the people of God, was very low in Isaiah's time. The people, who, in the days of Solomon, were attached to the service of God, honoured with signal tokens of his presence and favour, and raised to the highest pitch of temporal prosperity, were now degenerated; the gold was become dim, and the fine gold changed. Iniquity abounded, judgments were impending, yet insensibility and security prevailed, and the words of many were stout against the Lord. But there were a few who feared the Lord, whose eyes affected their hearts, and who mourned for the evils which they could not prevent. These, and these only, were, in strictness of speech, the people of the Lord, and to these the message of comfort is addressed. Speak to Jerusalem comfortably, speak *to her heart* (as the Hebrew word is), to her very case, and tell her that there is a balm for all her wounds, a cordial for all her griefs, in this one consideration, Messiah is at hand. In the prophetic style, things future are described as present, and that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken of as sure to take place, is considered as already done. Thus the prophet, "rapt into future times," contemplates the manifestation of Messiah, the accomplishment of his great undertaking, and all the happy consequences of his obedience unto death for men, as though he stood upon the spot, and with John, the harbinger of our Lord (whose appearance he immediately describes), was pointing with his finger to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

This comfortable message consists of two parts. First, the removal of evil,—"Her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned." Secondly, a promise of good, more than equivalent to all her afflictions,—"She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

I. Two ideas are included in the original term, translated "warfare:"

1. A state of service, connected with hardship, like that of the military life, Numb. i. 3.

2. An appointed time, as it is rendered in Job, vii. 1, and xiv. 14.

These ideas equally apply to the Mosaic dispensation. The spirit of that institution

was comparatively a spirit of bondage, distance, and fear; and the state of the church, while under the law, is resembled by the apostle to that of a minor, who, though he be an heir, is under tutors and governors, and differeth but little from a servant, until the time appointed of the Father, Gal. iv. 1—4. The ceremonial law, with respect to its inefficacy, is styled weak, and with respect to the long train of its multiplied, expensive, difficult, and repeated appointments, a yoke and burden. But it was only for a prescribed time The gospel was designed to supersede it, and to introduce a state of life, power, liberty, and confidence. The blackness and darkness, the fire and tempest, and other circumstances of terror attendant on the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai (Heb. xii. 18—22.), which not only struck the people with dismay, but caused even Moses himself to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake," were expressive of its design; which was not to lead the people of Israel to expect peace and hope from their best obedience to that covenant, but rather to convince them of the necessity of a better covenant, established upon better promises, and to direct their hopes to Messiah, who was prefigured by all their sacrifices, and who, in the fulness of time, was to make a complete atonement for sin, by the sacrifice of himself. Then their legal figurative constitution would cease, the shadows give place to the substance, and the true worshippers of God would be instructed, enabled, and encouraged, to worship him in spirit and in truth; no more as servants, but in the temper of adoption, as the children of God, by faith in the Son of his love.

There is a considerable analogy to this difference between the law and the gospel, as contradistinguished from each other, in the previous distress of a sinner, when he is made sensible of his guilt and danger as a transgressor of the law of God, and the subsequent peace which he obtains by believing the gospel. The good seed of the word of grace can only take root and flourish in a soil duly prepared. And this preparation of the heart (Prov. xvi. 1), without which, all that is read or heard concerning Messiah produces no permanent good effect, is wholly from the Lord. The first good work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of fallen man, is to convince of sin, John xvi. 9. He gives some due impressions of the majesty and holiness of the God with whom we have to do, of our dependence upon him, of our obligations to him as our Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor; then we begin to form our estimate of duty, of sin, and its desert, not from the prevalent maxims and judgment of mankind around us, but from the unerring standard of scripture. Thence new and painful apprehensions arise—the lofty looks of man are humbled, his haughtiness is brought low, his mouth stopped, or only opened to confess his guilt and vileness, and to cry for mercy. He now feels himself under the law; it condemns him, and he cannot reply; it commands him, and he cannot obey He has neither righteousness nor strength, and must sink into despair, were it not that he is now qualified to hearken to the gospel with other ears, and to read the scriptures with other eyes (if I may so speak), than he once did. He now knows he is sick, and therefore knows his need of a physician. This state of anxiety, conflict, and fear, which keeps comfort from his heart, and perhaps slumber from his eyes, is often of long continuance. There is no common standard whereby to determine either the degree or the duration. Both differ in different persons; and as the body and the mind have a strong and reciprocal influence upon each other, it is probable the difference observable in such cases may in part depend upon constitutional causes. However, the time is a prescribed time, and though not subject to any rules or reasonings of ours, is limited and regulated by the wisdom of God. He wounds and he heals, in his own appointed moment. None that continue waiting upon him, and seeking salvation, in the means which he has directed, shall be finally disappointed. Sooner or later he gives them, according to his promise, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, Isa. lxi. 3. This warfare is accomplished, when they rightly understand and cordially believe the following clause.

Her iniquity is pardoned.—Though the sacrifices under the law had an immediate and direct effect to restore the offender, for whom they were offered, to the privileges pertaining to the people of Israel, considered as a nation or commonwealth, they could not, of themselves, cleanse the conscience from guilt. It is a dictate of right reason, no less than of revelation, that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin, Heb. x. 4. For this purpose, the blood of Christ had a retrospective efficacy, and was the only ground of consolation for a convinced sinner from the beginning of the world. He was proposed to our first parents as the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15. In this seed Abraham believed, and was justified, and all of every age who were justified, were partakers of Abraham's faith. Therefore the apostle teaches us, that when God set him forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, he declared his righteousness in the remission of sins that were past, Rom. iii. 25. For though we may suppose God would have declared his mercy in forgiving sin upon any terms, no consideration but the death of his Son could have exhibited his righteousness; that is, his holiness, justice, and truth, in the pardon of sin. True penitents and believers were par-

doned and saved under the law, but not by the law. Their faith looked through all the legal institutions to him who was represented and typified by them. But the types which revealed him, in a sense concealed him likewise; so that, though Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced, and a succession of the servants of God foresaw his glory and his sufferings, and spake of him; yet, in general, the church of the Old Testament rather desired and longed for, than actually possessed, that fulness of light and knowledge concerning the person, offices, love, and victory of Messiah, which is the privilege of those who enjoy and believe the gospel, Heb. xi. 39, 40. Yet great discoveries of these things were vouchsafed to some of the prophets, particularly to Isaiah, who, on account of the clearness of his views of the Redeemer and his kingdom, has been sometimes styled the fifth evangelist. The most evangelical part of his prophecy, or at least that part in which he prosecutes the subject with the least interruption, begins with this chapter and with this verse. And he proposes it for the comfort of the mourners in Zion in his day. We know that the Son of God, of whom Moses and the prophets spake, is actually come (1 John v. 20); that the atonement for sin is made, the ransom for sinners paid and accepted. Now the shadows are past, the vail removed, the night is ended, the dawn, the day, is arrived, yea the Sun of righteousness is arisen, with healing in his wings, Mal. iv. 2. God is reconciled in his Son, and the ministers of the gospel are now authorised to preach comfort to all who mourn under a sense of sin; to tell them, all manner of sin is forgiven, for the Redeemer's sake, and that the iniquity of those who believe in him is freely and abundantly pardoned.

II. Though the last clause of the verse does not belong to the passage, as selected for the Oratorio, it is so closely connected with the subject, that I am not willing to omit it. "She has received at the Lord's hand double for all her sin." The meaning here cannot be, that her afflictions had already been more and greater, than her sins had deserved. The just desert of sin cannot be received in the present life, for the wages of sin is death and the curse of the law, or, in the apostle's words, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Therefore a living man can have no reason to complain under the heaviest sufferings. If we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners, we have likewise cause to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities. Nor can the words be so applied to Messiah, as to intimate, that even his sufferings were more than necessary, or greater than the exigence of the case required. The efficacy of his atonement is indeed greater than the actual application, and sufficient to save the whole race of mankind if they truly believed in the Son of God. We read, that he groaned and bled upon the cross, till he could say, It is finished, but no longer. It becomes us to refer to infinite wisdom the reasons why his sufferings were prolonged for such a precise time; but I think we may take it for granted, that they did not endure an hour or a minute longer than was strictly necessary. The expression seems to be elliptical, and I apprehend the true sense is, that Jerusalem should receive blessings, double, much greater than all the afflictions which sin had brought upon her; and in general to us, to every believing sinner, that the blessings of the gospel are an unspeakably great compensation, and overbalance, for all afflictions of every kind with which we have been, or can be exercised. Afflictions are the fruit of sin, and because our sins have been many, our afflictions may be many. "But where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded," Rom. v. 20.

Before our Lord healed the paralytic man who was brought to him, he said, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," Mark ii. 5. His outward malady rendered him an object of compassion to those who brought him: but he appears to have been sensible of an inward malady, which only Jesus could discern, or pity, or relieve. I doubt not but his conscience was burdened with guilt. An assurance therefore that his sins were forgiven, was sufficient to make him be of good cheer, whether his palsy were removed or not. To this purpose the psalmist speaks absolutely and without exception. "Blessed is the man, (however circumstanced), whose transgression is forgiven, whose iniquity is covered," Psal. xxxii. 1. Though he be poor, afflicted, diseased, neglected or despised, if the Lord imputeth not his iniquity to him, he is a blessed man. There is no situation in human life so deplorable, but a sense of the pardoning love of God can support and comfort the sufferer under it, compose his spirit, yea, make him exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations. For he who feels the power of the blood of Jesus cleansing his conscience from guilt, and giving him access by faith to the throne of grace, with liberty to say, Abba, Father; he knows that all his trials are under the direction of wisdom and love, are all working together for his good, and that the heaviest of them are light, and the longest momentary, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is reserved for him in a better world, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. Even at present in the midst of his sufferings, having communion with God, and a gracious submission to his will, he possesses a peace that passeth understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

I shall close this preliminary discourse with a few observations by way of improvement.

1. How justly may we adopt the prophet's

words, "Who is a God like unto thee!" Micah, vii, 18. Behold and admire his goodness! Infinitely happy and glorious in himself, he has provided for the comfort of those who were rebels against his government, and transgressors of his holy law. What was degenerate Israel, and what are we, that he should thus prevent us with his mercy, remember us in our low estate, and redeem us from misery, in such a way, and at such a price! Salvation is wholly of grace (Ephes. ii. 5); not only undeserved, but undesired by us, till he is pleased to awaken us to a sense of our need of it. And then we find every thing prepared that our wants require, or our wishes can conceive; yea, that he has done exceedingly beyond what we could either ask or think. Salvation is wholly of the Lord (Psal. iii. 8), and bears those signatures of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, which distinguish all his works from the puny imitations of men. It is every way worthy of himself; a great, a free, a full, a sure salvation. It is great,—whether we consider the objects, miserable and hell-deserving sinners; the end, the restoration of such alienated creatures to his image and favour, to immortal life and happiness; or the means, the incarnation, humiliation, sufferings and death of his beloved Son. It is free,—without exception of persons or cases, without any conditions or qualifications, but such as he himself performs in them, and bestows upon them. It is full,—including every desirable blessing; pardon, peace, adoption, protection and guidance through this world, and in the world to come eternal life and happiness, in the unclouded, uninterrupted enjoyment of the favour and love of God, with the perfect and perpetual exclusion of every evil.

2. When the Lord God, who knows the human heart, would speak comfort to it, he proposes one object, and only one, as the necessary and all-sufficient source of consolation. This is Messiah. Jesus in his person and offices, known and received by faith, affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. If we admit that they who live in the spirit of the world, can make a poor shift to amuse themselves, and be tolerably satisfied in a state of prosperity, while every thing goes on according to their wish; while we make this concession (which however is more than we need allow them, for we know that no state of life is free from anxiety, disappointment, weariness, and disgust), yet we must consider them as objects of compassion. It is a proof of the weakness and disorder of their minds, that they are capable of being satisfied with such trifles. Thus if a lunatic conceives his cell to be a palace, that his chains are ornaments of gold, if he calls a wreath of his straw a crown, puts it on his head, and affects the language of majesty—we do not suppose the poor creature to be happy, because he tells us that he is so; but we rather consider his complacence in his situation, as an effect and proof of his malady. We pity him, and, if we were able, would gladly restore him to his senses, though we know a cure would immediately put an end to his pleasing delusions. But, I say, supposing or admitting the world could make its votaries happy in a state of prosperity, it will, it must, leave them without resource in the day of trouble. And they are to be pitied indeed, who, when their gourds are withered, when the desire of their eyes is taken from them with a stroke, or the evil which they most feared touches them, or when death looks them closely in the face, have no acquaintance with God, no access to the throne of grace, but being without Christ, are without a solid hope of good hereafter, though they are forced to feel the vanity and inconstancy of every thing here. But they who know Messiah, who believe in him, and partake of his spirit, cannot be comfortless. They recollect what he suffered for them, they know that every circumstance and event of life is under his direction, and designed to work for their good: that though they sow in tears, they shall soon reap in joy: and therefore they possess their souls in patience, and are cheerful, yea comfortable, under those trying dispensations of providence, which when they affect the lovers of pleasure, too often either excite in them a spirit of presumptuous murmuring against the will of God; or sink them into despondency, and all the melancholy train of evils attendant on those who languish and pine away under that depression of spirits, emphatically styled a broken heart.

3. To be capable of the comfort my text proposes, the mind must be in a suitable disposition. A free pardon is a comfort to a malefactor, but it implies guilt; and therefore they who have no apprehension that they have broken the laws, would be rather offended than comforted, by an offer of pardon. This is one principal cause of that neglect, yea contempt, which the gospel of the grace of God meets with from the world. If we could suppose that a company of people who were all trembling under an apprehension of his displeasure, constrained to confess the justice of the sentence, but not as yet informed of any way to escape, were to hear this message for the first time, and to be fully assured of its truth and authority, they would receive it as life from the dead. But it is to be feared, that for want of knowing themselves, and their real state in the sight of him with whom they have to do, many persons, who have received pleasure from the music of the Messiah, have neither found, nor expected, nor desired to find, any comfort from the words.

SERMON II.

THE HARBINGER.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high-way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. ISAIAH, xl. 3.—5.

THE general style of the prophecies is poetical. The inimitable simplicity which characterizes every part of divine revelation, is diversified according to the nature of the subject; and the magnificence and variety of imagery which constitute the life and spirit of poetry, evidently distinguish the style of the Psalms, or Isaiah, and the other poetical books, from that of the historical, even in the common versions. The various rules and properties of Hebrew poetry are not, at this distance of time, certainly known. But the present Bishop of London*, in his elegant and instructive lectures on the subject, and in the discourse prefixed to his translation of Isaiah, has fully demonstrated one property. It usually consists either of parallel, or contrasted sentences. The parallel expressions (excepting in the book of Proverbs) are most prevalent. In these the same thought, for substance, expressed in the first member, is repeated, with some difference of phrase, in the following; which, if it enlarges or confirms the import of what went before, seldom varies the idea. Almost any passage I first cast my eye upon, will sufficiently explain my meaning. For instance, in the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah:

Ver. 1. Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
9. Therefore is judgment far from us,
Neither doth justice overtake us:
We wait for light, but behold obscurity;
For brightness, but we walk in darkness.

So in chap. lv. 2.
Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?
And your labour for that which satisfieth not?
Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

So likewise in the second Psalm:
Ver. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall have them in derision.
5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure.

These specimens may suffice for my present purpose. The knowledge of this peculiarity of the poetical idiom, may often save us the trouble of enquiring minutely into the meaning of every single word, when one plain and comprehensive sense arises from a view of the whole passage taken together. This observation applies to the first of the verses in my text. Though it be true that John the Baptist lived for a season retired and unnoticed in a wilderness, and began to preach in the wilderness of Judea, the expression, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*, does not merely foretel that circumstance. The verse consists of two parallels. The prophet, "rapt into future times," hears a voice proclaiming the approach of Messiah, and this is the majestic language:

In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The wilderness and the desert are the same here, as likewise in chap. xxxv. 1, where the happy, the sudden, the unexpected effects of his appearance are described:—

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

Now, to see, by the eye of faith, the glory of the Redeemer in his appearance; to see power divine preparing the way before him; to enter into the gracious and wonderful design of his salvation; to acknowledge, admire, and adore him as the Lord, and humbly to claim him as our God, must afford a pleasure very different from that which the most excellent music, however well adapted to the words, can possibly give. The latter may be relished by a worldly mind; the former is appropriate, and can only be enjoyed by those who are taught of God.

When the eastern monarchs travelled, harbingers went before to give notice that the King was upon the road, and likewise proper persons to prepare his way and to remove obstacles. Some of them (if we may depend upon history), in the affectation of displaying their pomp and power, effected extraordinary things upon such occasions. For man, though vain, would appear wise; though a sinful worm, he would fain be accounted great. We read of their having actually filled up valleys,

* Dr. Lowth.

and levelled hills, to make a commodious road, for themselves or their armies, through places otherwise impassable. The prophet thus illustrates great things by small, and accomodates the language and usages of men to divine truth. Messiah is about to visit a wilderness world, and those parts of it which he blesses with his presence, shall become the garden of the Lord. Till then it is all desolate, rocky, and wild. But his way shall be prepared. Mountainous difficulties shall sink down before him into plains. In defiance of all obstacles, his glory shall be revealed in the wilderness, and all flesh shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The leading ideas respecting Messiah's appearance suggested by this sublime representation, are,

I. The state of the world at his coming,—"A wilderness."

II. The preparation of his way,—"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

III. The manner and effects of his manifestation,—"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it."

I. The word "wilderness," I suppose, generally excites the idea of an intricate, solitary, uncultivated, dangerous place. Such is the description Jeremiah gives of that wilderness through which the Lord led Israel, when he had delivered them from Egypt: "A land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man passeth through, and where no man dwelt," Jer. ii. 6. The world, in which we sojourn for a season, does not appear to us in this unpleasing view at first. The spirit, and the things of it, are congenial to our depraved inclinations; and especially in early life, our unexperienced hearts form high expectations from it; and we rather hope to find it a paradise than a wilderness. But when the convincing power of the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the understanding, we awake as from a dream; the enchantment by which we were deluded is broken, and we then begin to judge rightly of the world: that it is a wearisome wilderness indeed, and that our only important concern with it is to get happily out of it. In a spiritual view, a wilderness is a significant emblem of the state of mankind, both Jews and Heathens, at that period which the apostle calls the fulness of time, when God sent forth his son, Gal. iv. 4.

Israel, once the beloved people of God, was at that time so extremely degenerated, that, a few individuals excepted, the vineyard of the Lord, so highly cultivated, so signally protected, yielded only wild grapes, Isa. v. 4. Though they were not addicted to imitate the idolatry of the Heathens, as their forefathers had been, they were no less alienated from the true God; and their wickedness was the more aggravated, for being practised under a professed attachment to the forms of his law They drew nigh to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him, Mark vii. 6. Their very worship profaned the temple in which they gloried, and the holy house of prayer, through their abominations, was become a den of thieves. They owned the divine authority of the scriptures, and read them with seeming attention, but rendered them of none effect, through the greater attention they paid to the corrupt traditions of their elders. They boasted in their relation to Abraham as their father, but proved themselves to be indeed the children of those who had persecuted and murdered the prophets, Matt. xxiii. 30, 31. The Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in the chair of Moses, and were the public teachers of the people, under an exterior garb of sanctity, of prayer, and fasting, were guilty of oppression, fraud, and uncleanness; and while they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, their real character was a combination of pride and hypocrisy. Therefore he who knew their hearts, and saw through all their disguises, compared them to painted sepulchres, fair to outward appearance, but within full of filth and impurity, Math. xxiii. 27. From the spirit of these blind guides, we may judge of the spirit of the blind people who held them in admiration, and were willingly directed and led by them. Thus was the faithful city become a harlot: it was once full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers, Isa. i. 21. Such a wilderness was Judea when Messiah condescended to visit it.

Among the Heathens, ignorance, idolatry, sensuality, and cruelty universally prevailed. Their pretended wise men had indeed talked of wisdom and morality from age to age, but their speculations were no more than swelling words of vanity, cold, trifling, uncertain, and without any valuable influence either upon themselves or upon others. They had philosophers, poets, orators, musicians, and artists, eminent in their way; but the nations reputed the most civilized were overwhelmed with abominable wickedness equally with the rest. The shocking effect of their idolatry upon their moral principles and conduct, notwithstanding their attainments in arts and science, is described by the apostle in the close of the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. With great propriety, therefore, the state of the world, both Jew and Gentile, considered in a moral view, is compared by the prophet to a wilderness—a barren and dreary waste. The pursuits and practices of the world were diametrically opposite to the spirit and design of that kingdom which Messiah was about to set up, and therefore, as the event proved, directly disposed to withstand his progress. But,

II. Before his appearance a way was prepared for him in the wilderness

The providence of God, by a gradual train of dispensations, disposed the political state of mankind in a subserviency to this great event. All the commotions and revolutions which take place in the kingdoms of the earth are so many detached parts of a complicated but wisely-determined plan, of which the establishment of Messiah's kingdom is the final cause. The kings and politicians of the world are not aware of this. God is not in their thoughts. But while they pursue their own ends, and make havoc of the peace of mankind, to gratify their own interests and ambition, and look no higher, they are ignorantly, and without intention, acting as instruments of the will of God. The wrath of man is over-ruled to his praise and his purpose (Psal. lxxvi. 10), and succeeds so far as it is instrumental to the accomplishment of his designs, and no farther. While they move in this line, their schemes, however injudiciously laid, and whatever disproportion there may seem between the means they are possessed of and the vast objects they aim at, prosper beyond their own expectations; but the remainder of their wrath he will restrain. Their best projected and best supported enterprises issue in shame and disappointment, if they are not necessary parts of that chain of causes and events which the Lord of all has appointed. Thus Sennacherib, when sent by the God whom he knew not to execute his displeasure against the kingdom of Judah, had, for a time, a rapid and uninterrupted series of conquests (Isa. xxxvii. 26—29); but his attempt upon Jerusalem was beyond the limits of his commission, and therefore failed.

Among the principal instruments who were appointed to prepare a way in the wilderness for Messiah, and to facilitate the future spread of his kingdom, we may take notice of Alexander; and this designation secured his success, though the extravagancies, excesses, and rashness which marked his character, were sufficient to have rendered his undertakings abortive, had he not been in the hand of the Lord of hosts, as an axe or a saw in the hand of the workman. By his conquests the knowledge of the Greek language was diffused among many nations; and the Hebrew scriptures being soon afterwards translated into that language an expectation of some great deliverer was raised far and wide, before Messiah appeared. When this service was fulfilled, the haughty presumptuous worm who had been employed in it, was no longer necessary, and therefore was soon laid aside: and all his proud designs, for the establishment of his own family and dominion, perished with him. His empire was divided towards the four winds of heaven, and this division likewise contributed to bring forward the purpose of God, Dan. viii. 8. For each of the four kingdoms established by his successors being thus separated, became a more easy prey to the Roman power. This power, which had been gradually increasing and extending in the course of several hundred years, was at its height about the time of our Lord's birth. The greatest part of the habitable earth which was at that time distinctly known was united under one empire, composed of various kingdoms and governments, which, though once independent and considerable, were then no more than Roman provinces; and as all the provinces had an immediate connexion with Rome, a way was thus prepared, and an intercourse opened on every side, for the promulgation of the gospel.

Among the Jews, the professing people of God, a way was prepared for Messiah by the ministry of his harbinger, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (as had been foretold of him by the prophets, particularly by the last of the prophets, Malachi), preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and proclaiming that the Saviour and his kingdom were at hand. He who sent him accompanied his mission with a divine power. A multitude of persons, of various descriptions, were impressed by his message, insomuch that John himself seems to have been astonished at the numbers and characters of those who came to his baptism.

When the ministry of John had thus previously disposed the minds of many for the reception of Messiah, and engaged the attention of the people at large, Messiah himself entered upon his public office, on the same scene and among the same people. As he increased, John willingly decreased. So the morning star ceases to be seen as the sun advances above the horizon. This distinguished servant of God having finished his work, was removed to a better world. Not in the triumphant manner in which Elijah was translated, but as he came to announce a new dispensation, under which believers were to expect opposition and ill-treatment, to walk by faith, and frequently to be called to seal their testimony with their blood, he was permitted to fall a sacrifice to the revenge of a wanton woman; and though we are assured that none of the race of Adam was greater in the estimation of God than he, his death was asked and procured as the reward of an idle dance, Math. xi. 11; xiv. 8—11.

III. The latter part of my text describes the manner and immediate effects of Messiah's appearance during his personal ministry, with an intimation of its future and more extensive consequences.

The valleys shall be exalted.—A valley is an emblem of a low condition. Such was the condition of most of our Lord's followers; but his notice and favour exalted them highly. He came to preach the gospel to the poor, to fill the hungry with good things, to save the chief of sinners, to open a door of hope and

salvation to persons of the vilest and most despicable characters in human estimation. Such, for instance, was the woman mentioned by the evangelist Luke, chap. vii. 37, 38. The Pharisee thought our Lord dishonoured himself by permitting such a one to touch him, nor had she a word to say in her own behalf. But the compassionate Saviour highly exalted her, when he vouchsafed to plead her cause, to express his gracious acceptance of her tears and love, and to assure her that her sins, though many, were all forgiven. Very low likewise was the state of the malefactor on the cross; he had committed great crimes, was suffering grievous torments, and in the very jaws of death, Luke xxiii. 42. But grace visited his heart; he was plucked as a brand out of the fire, and exalted to paradise and glory. The world accounts the proud happy, and honours the covetous if they be prosperous. But true honour cometh from God. They who are partakers of the faith and hope of the gospel, and have interest in the precious promises, are indeed the rich, the happy, the excellent of the earth, however they may be unnoticed or despised by their fellow-creatures. The honour of places likewise is to be considered in this light. Bethlehem, though but of little note among the thousands of Judah, was rendered more illustrious by the birth of Messiah than Babylon or Rome. The Galileans were held in contempt by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as a mean and provincial people; but the places in Galilee which our Lord frequently visited, or where he sometimes resided, are spoken of as exalted unto heaven, by the honour and privilege of his presence, though some of them were no more than fishing-towns. And so at this day, if we have spiritual discernment, we shall judge that a little village, where the gospel is known, prized, and adorned by a suitable conversation, has a dignity and importance far preferable to all the parade of a wealthy metropolis, if destitute of the like privileges.

On the contrary, every mountain and hill shall be brought low.—Messiah came to pour contempt on all human glory. He detected the wickedness and confounded the pride of the Scribes, and Pharisees, and rulers, and made it appear that what is highly esteemed among men, the το ὑψηλον, or summit of their boasted excellency, is worthless, yea, abomination in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. And by living himself in a state of poverty, and associating chiefly with poor people, he placed the vanity of the distinctions and affluence which mankind generally admire and envy, in the most striking and humiliating light. Such likewise was and will e the effect of his gospel. When faithfully preached, it is found mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, high thoughts, and every species of self-exaltation. When the convincing word touches the heart, it has an effect like the hand-writing which Belshazzar saw upon the wall, Dan. v. 6. In that day the lofty looks of man are humbled, and his haughtiness bowed down (Isa. ii. 11); he dares no longer plead the goodness of his heart, or trust to the work of his hands. A sense of forgiveness and acceptance through the Beloved, received by faith in his atonement, lays him still lower: he now renounces as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, all that he once esteemed as gain, and is glad that he has no thing to trust or glory in but the cross, Phil iii. 7, 8. Farther, every mountain that opposes the kingdom of Messiah, in due time must sink into a plain, Zech. iv. 7. Though the nations rage, and the rulers take counsel together, he who sitteth in the heavens will support and maintain his own work, and all their power and policy shall fall before it.

The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.—He came to rectify the perverse disposition of the hearts of men, to soften and subdue their obstinate spirits, and to form to himself a willing people in the day of his power. The Jewish teachers, by their traditions and will-worship had given an apparent obliquity to the straight and perfect rule of the law of God, and deformed the beauties of holiness, binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, upon the conscience; but he vindicated the law from their corrupt glosses, and made the path of obedience plain, practicable, and pleasant.

Thus, the glory of the Lord was revealed.—Not to every eye: many, prejudiced by his outward appearance, and by the low mistaken views the Jews indulged of the office and kingdom of Messiah, whom they expected, could see no form or excellence in him that they should desire him; but his disciples could say, "We beheld his glory," John i. 14. He spake with authority. His word was power. He controlled the elements, he raised the dead. He knew, and revealed, and judged the thoughts of men's hearts. He forgave sin, and thus exercised the rights and displayed the perfections of divine sovereignty in his own person. But the prophecy looks forward to future times. After his ascension he filled his apostles and disciples with light and power, and sent them forth in all directions to proclaim his love and grace to a sinful world. Then the glory of the Lord was revealed, and spread from one kingdom to another people. We still wait for the full accomplishment of this promise, and expect a time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory: For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It is to the power of his word that we owe the continuance of day and night, and the regular return of the seasons of the year. But these appointments only for a limited term; the hour is c

ing, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not a jot or tittle of what he hath declared concerning his kingdom of grace shall fail, till the whole be fulfilled.

Those of you who have heard the Messiah will do well to recollect, whether you were affected by such thoughts as these while this passage was performed; or whether you were only captivated by the music, and paid no more regard to the words than if they had no meaning. They are, however, the great truths of God. May they engage your serious attention, now they are thus set before you!

SERMON III.

THE SHAKING OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. HAGGAI. ii 6, 7.

GOD shook the earth when he proclaimed his law to Israel from Sinai. The description, though very simple, presents to our thoughts a scene unspeakably majestic, grand, and awful. The mountain was in flames at the top, and trembled to its basis, Exod. xix. 16—19. Dark clouds, thunderings and lightnings filled the air. The hearts of the people, of the whole people, trembled likewise; and even Moses himself said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Then, as the apostle, referring to this passage, observes, the voice of the Lord shook the earth, Heb. xii. 26. But the prophet here speaks of another, a greater, a more important, and extensive concussion. Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake not the earth only, but also the heavens.

If we really believe that the scriptures are true, that the prophecies were delivered by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that they shall all be certainly fulfilled,—how studious should we be to attain a right understanding of passages and events, in which we are so nearly interested, that our hearts may be duly affected by them! But, alas! experience and observation strongly confirm the remark of the poet,

Men are but children of a larger growth.

If you put a telescope into the hands of a child, he will probably admire the outside, especially if it be finely ornamented. But the use of it, in giving a more distinct view of distant objects, is what the child has no conception of. The music of the Messiah is but an ornament of the words, which have a very weighty sense. This sense no music can explain, and when rightly understood, will have such an effect as no music can produce. That the music of the Messiah has a great effect in its own kind, I can easily believe. The ancients, to describe the power of the music of Orpheus, pretend, that when he played upon his harp, the wild beasts thronged around him to listen, and seemed to forget their natural fierceness. Such expressions are figurative, and designed to intimate, that, by his address and instructions, he civilised men of fierce and savage dispositions. But if we were to allow the account to be true in the literal sense, I should still suppose that the wild beasts were affected by his music only while they heard it, and that it did not actually change their natures, and render lions and tigers gentle as lambs, from that time forward. Thus I can allow, that they who heard the Messiah might be greatly impressed during the performance; but when it was ended, I suppose they would retain the very same dispositions they had before it began. And many, I fear, were no more affected by this sublime declaration of the Lord's design to shake the heavens and the earth, than they would have been, if the same music had been set to the words of a common ballad.

The Jews, when they returned from captivity, and undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord, met with many discouragements. They were disturbed by the opposition and arts of their enemies, who at one time so far prevailed, as to compel them, for a season, to intermit the work. And when the foundation of the temple was laid, the joy of those who hoped soon to see the solemn worship of God restored, was damped by the grief of others, who remembered the magnificence of the first temple, and wept to think how far the second temple would come short of it, Hag. ii. 3. In these circumstances, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to animate the people by a promise, that, inferior as the second temple might appear, compared with that which Solomon built, the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former, Ezra, iii. 12, 13. Had this depended upon a profusion of silver and gold, the Lord could have provided it: for "the silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." But the glory spoken of was of a different kind. The presence of Messiah in the second temple would render it far more honourable and glorious, though less pompous, than the temple of Solomon; and would be attended with greater consequences than even the manifestation of the God of Israel on Mount Sinai. Then he only shook the earth; but under the second temple he would shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, to introduce the kingdom of Messiah.

We may consider from the words,

I. A character of Messiah,—"The Desire of all nations."

II. The effects of his appearance,—"Shaking the heavens and the earth."

III. His "filling the house with glory." This clause of ver. 7. is not in the passage set to music; but as it is an eminent part of the prophecy, I shall not exclude it.

I. Messiah is here styled, "The Desire of all nations." The propriety of this title may be illustrated by two considerations.

1. Before he came into the world to save sinners, an expectation prevailed in many nations, that a great deliverer and friend of mankind was at hand. This was, perhaps, partly the effect of some ancient traditions, founded on the promises of God respecting the seed of the woman, the traces of which, though much corrupted by the addition of fables, were not worn out—but might be chiefly owing to several dispersions of the people of Israel, and imperfect notices, derived from the scriptures in their hands. The sense of many prophecies concerning Messiah, though misapplied, is remarkably expressed in a short poem of Virgil,* written a few years before our Saviour's birth. This eclogue, of which we have a beautiful imitation in our own language by Mr. Pope, affords a sufficient proof that the Heathens had an idea of some illustrious personage, who would shortly appear, and restore peace, prosperity, and all the blessings of their imaginary golden age to mankind. The miseries and evils with which the world was filled, made the interposition of such a deliverer highly desirable. There were even a few among the Heathens, such as Socrates and his immediate disciples, who seem to have felt the necessity of a divine teacher; and to be sensible that man, in a state of nature, was too depraved, and too ignorant, to be either able or disposed to worship God acceptably without one. There is reason to believe, that the revelation which we enjoy, though despised by too many who affect to be called philosophers in modern times, would have been highly prized by the wisest and best of the philosophers of antiquity. Socrates thought men were not capable of knowing and expressing their own wants, nor of asking what was good for themselves, unless it should please God to send them an instructor from heaven, to teach them how to pray. And therefore,

2. The need that all nations had of such a Saviour, is sufficient to establish his right to this title, admitting they had no knowledge or expectation of him. If we could suppose a nation involved for ages in the darkness of night, though they had no previous notion of light, yet light might be said to be their desire, because the light, whenever they should enjoy it, would put an end to their calamity, would answer their wants, and, in that sense accomplish their wishes; for if they could not directly wish for light, they would naturally wish for relief. The Heathens were miserably bewildered. They had a thirst for happiness, which could not be satisfied by any, or all the expedients and pursuits within their reach. They had fears and forebodings of conscience, for which they knew no remedy. They were so sensible, both of their guilt and their weakness, that, being ignorant of the character of the true God, and of that forgiveness which is with him, in times of extremity they frequently offered the most expensive sacrifices to the objects of their idolatrous superstition, even the blood and lives of their children, Micah, vi. 6. When Messiah appeared, as he was the glory of Israel, so he was a light to the Gentiles, as we shall have opportunity of observing more at large hereafter. He, therefore, who came purposely to bless the nations, by turning them from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God, may justly be called their desire, though in the time of their ignorance, they could form no suitable conception of him

II. "I will shake the heavens and the earth."—This part of the prophecy has been, in a measure, literally fulfilled. At his birth, a new star appeared. At his death, the sun, withdrew his shining, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the dead arose. During his life, he often suspended and over-ruled the stated laws of nature, and exercised supreme power over the visible and invisible worlds. He shook the kingdom of darkness, spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them by his cross. He shook the kingdoms of the earth; the idols trembled and disappeared before his gospel, till at length the Roman empire renounced Heathenism, and embraced the Christian name.

But the language of prophecy is highly figurative. Mountains and trees, land and water, sun and moon, heaven and earth, often signify nations, people, and governments; and particularly, heaven and earth are used to denote the religious and political establishment of Israel; or, as we say, their constitution in church and state. This, without doubt, is the primary sense here. The appearance of Messiah shall be connected with the total dissolution of the Jewish economy. The whole of their Levitical institution was fulfilled, superseded, and abrogated by Messiah, which was solemnly signified by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom at his death. And a few years afterwards the temple itself was destroyed, by which event, the worship of God according to the law, of which the temple-service was an essential part, was rendered utterly impracticable. The civil state likewise was dissolved; the

* Virg. Ecl. iv.

extirpated from the promised land, and dispersed far and wide among the nations of the earth. Though, in one sense, they are preserved, by the wonderful providence of God, as a distinct people, unaffected by the changes and customs around them; in another sense, they are not a people, having neither settlement nor government, but living as strangers and foreigners in every country where their lot has been cast, Hos. iii. 4. Nothing like this can be found in the history of mankind. It is an obvious, striking, and perpetual proof of the truth of the scriptures. What was foretold concerning them by Moses and the succeeding prophets, is accomplished to a demonstration before our eyes. How unlikely was it once that it should be thus! yet thus it must be, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And all that he has spoken is equally sure. He will yet again shake the heavens and the earth, dissolve the frame of nature, and execute his threatened judgments upon all those who do not receive and obey his gospel.

III. "He shall fill this house with glory." He did so, when he condescended to visit it in person. The blind and the lame came thither to him, and he healed them, Matth. xxi. 13—16. Children felt his power, and sung hosannah to the son of David, a title appropriate to Messiah; and when the Pharisees rebuked them, he said, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out," Luke xix. 40. As the Lord in his own house, he purged the temple, and drove out those who profaned it, and not one of his enemies durst offer the least resistance to his will. And when he left it the last time, with sovereign authority, he denounced that awful sentence, which was soon afterwards executed by the Romans, both upon the temple and the nation, Matth. xxiii. 37. His glory filled the temple when he was an infant, so that Simeon and Anna then acknowledged his character, and spake of him to those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, Luke, ii. 25, 38. Especially his glory was manifested, when he proclaimed himself the fountain of life, and invited every thirsty weary sinner to come to him, to drink and live for ever, John, vii. 37.

The temple of Jerusalem has been long since destroyed. But he has still a house, a house not made with hands. This is his church, comprising all the members of his mystical body. He dwells in each of them individually; he dwells in and among them collectively. Where two or three are met in his name, where his ordinances are administered and prized, where his gospel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there he is present in the midst of them: There his glory is seen, his voice heard, his power felt, his goodness tasted, and the savour of his name is diffused as a precious ointment, which refreshes the heart of his people, renews their strength, and comforts them under all their sorrows and cares. The glory and magnificence of the temple-worship, even in the days of Solomon, was faint compared with the glory displayed to the hearts of believers who worship him in spirit and in truth, under the New-Testament dispensation. But it can only be perceived by an enlightened and spiritual mind. To outward appearance all may be low and humiliating. The malice of their enemies has often constrained his people to assemble in woods and on mountains, in places under ground, or in the dead of the night, to secrete themselves from informers. But vaulted roofs and costly garments, the solemn parade of processions, music and choristers, and the presence of nobles and dignitaries, are not necessary to constitute the glory of gospel-worship. It is enough that he, in whose name they meet, condescends to visit them with the power and influence of his Spirit, to animate and hear their prayers, to feed them with the good word of his grace, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. If they have these blessings, they desire no more, they are compensated for all their difficulties and hardships; and, however unnoticed and despised by the world, they can say, "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 7. For they approach by faith to the city of the living God, the Jerusalem which is above, to the worship which is carried on day without night, by the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22.

But every member of this mystical temple, being by nature afar off from God, experiences a previous change, which may be not unfitly described by the terms of my text. Before the Lord takes possession of his people, and in order to it, he shakes the heavens and the earth. Their former views of God and of themselves are altered by a light which penetrates the soul. All that they have been building in religion till then is shaken and overturned. Their vain hopes are shaken to the foundation. This concussion makes way for the perception of his glory as a Saviour. In this day of his power they are made willing to throw open the gates of their hearts, that the King of glory may enter.

But as I do not stand here to amuse you with a declamation on a subject in which you are not immediately interested, and as my office as a preacher both warrants and requires me to address myself not only to your understandings but likewise to your consciences, I must be allowed, before I conclude, to propose this question to your consideration, Is Messiah, the desire of all nations, the object of your chief desire? How much depends upon the answer? Do you wish to know your present state in the sight of God? If

you are faithful to yourselves you may be satisfied, provided you will abide by the decision of scripture. God is well pleased in his Son; if you are well-pleased with him, if he is precious to you, and the desire of your soul is supremely directed to him, then you assuredly possess the beginning, the foretaste, and the earnest of eternal life. If you so enter into the descriptions given in the Bible of his person, love, office, and glory, as to place your whole dependence upon him, to devote yourselves simply to him, and to place your happiness in his favour, then you are happy indeed! happy even at present, though not exempted from a share in the afflictions incident to this mortal state. For your sins are pardoned, your persons are accepted in the Beloved: to you belong the promises of guidance, protection, and supply through life, victory over death, and then a crown of glory which fadeth not away. To say all in a few words, God is your Father, and heaven is your home.

But on the other hand, if you trust in yourselves that you are righteous and good, at least comparatively so; if your attachment to the business or the pleasures of the world engrosses your thoughts and application, so that you have no leisure to attend to the record which God has given of his Son, or no relish for the subject, you have been hitherto guilty of treating the most glorious display of the wisdom and goodness of God with contempt. Many persons thus employed and thus disposed, bear respectable characters in civil life, from which I do not wish to detract. But however amiable you may be in the judgment of your fellow-creatures, you are a sinner in the sight of God, and will be treated by him as an enemy to his government and glory, if you finally persist in a rejection of his gospel. The great point which will determine your state for eternity, will be this, What think you of Christ? For it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. He must and will fall under the curse and condemnation of the law, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day (for to-morrow is not ours), may you hear his voice, and flee for refuge to the hope set before you!

SERMON IV.

THE LORD COMING TO HIS TEMPLE.

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant in whom ye delight: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.—And he shall purify the sons of Levi—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. MALACHI, iii. 1—3.

"WHEREUNTO shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like?" Luke vii. 31. I represent to myself a number of persons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources they call in the assistance of music. And amidst a great variety of subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed the ground-work of a musical entertainment. And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The King, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diver-

accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments, Dan. iii. 5. Surely, if such a case as I have supposed could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility!

But is not this case more than a supposition? Is it not, in the most serious sense, actually realized amongst ourselves? I should insult your understandings if I judged a long application necessary. I know my supposition must have already led your thoughts to the subject of the Messiah, and to the spirit and temper of at least the greater part of the performers, and of the audiences. The holy scripture concludes all mankind under sin, Rom. iii. 9. It charges them all with treason and rebellion against the great sovereign Lawgiver and Benefactor, and declares the misery to which, as sinners, we are obnoxious. But God is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious. The stroke of death, which would instantly place us before his awful tribunal, is still suspended. In the meantime he affords us his gospel, by which he assures us there is forgiveness with him. He informs us of a Saviour, and that, of his great love to sinners, he has given his only Son to be an atonement and mediator in favour of all who shall sue for mercy in his name. The character of this Saviour, his unspeakable love, his dreadful sufferings, the agonies he endured in Gethsemane, and upon the cross, are made known to us. And as his past humiliation, so his present glory, and his invitation to come to him for pardon and eternal life, are largely declared. These are the principal points expressed in the passages of the Messiah. Mr. Handel, who set them to music, has been commemorated and praised, many years after his death, in a place professedly devoted to the praise and worship of God; yea (if I am not misinformed), the stated worship of God in that place was suspended for a considerable time, that it might be duly prepared for the commemoration of Mr. Handel. But, alas! how few are disposed to praise and commemorate Messiah himself! The same great truths, divested of the music, when delivered from the pulpit, are heard by many admirers of the oratorio with indifference, too often with contempt.

Having thus, as I conceived myself bound in duty, plainly and publicly delivered my sentiments, of the great impropriety of making the fundamental truths of christianity the subject of a public amusement, I leave what I have said to your serious reflections, hoping it will not be forgotten; for I do not mean to trouble you often with a repetition of it. Let us now consider the passage before us. If [illegible]ead it with attention, and consider the [illegible] ideas it suggests, and the emphatical [illegible]age with which they are clothed, you will not, perhaps, think the manner of my introducing it wholly improper.

Malachi confirms and unites the prophecies of Isaiah and Haggai, which were the subject of our two last discourses. John is the messenger, spoken of in the beginning of the first verse, sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Then the Lord himself shall come suddenly to his temple, that is, immediately after the appearance of his forerunner, and with regard to the people in general, unexpectedly.

The question, "Who may abide the day of his coming?" intimates the greatness and solemnity of the event. If we take his coming in an extensive sense to denote the whole of his sojourning upon earth, from his incarnation to his ascension, it is unspeakably the greatest of all events recorded in the annals of mankind; and though he lived in the form of a servant, and died the death of a malefactor, the vast consequences which depend upon his appearance under these humiliating circumstances, rendered it a manner of coming every way worthy of himself. It afforded a more awful discovery of the majesty, glory, and holiness of God, than was displayed upon Mount Sinai, and proved a closer and more searching appeal to the hearts and consciences of men. To enter more into the spirit and meaning of the question here proposed, we shall briefly take notice of the following points, which the words offer to our serious meditation. May the Holy Spirit whose office it is to glorify the Saviour, enlighten our hearts to understand them, with application to ourselves!

I. The names which are here ascribed to Messiah.

II. The suddenness of his coming.

III. The searching power of it in general, expressed by "a refiner's fire," and by "fuller's soap."

IV. Its purifying power on the sons of Levi, the priesthood in particular.

I. The names ascribed to Messiah.

The Lord.—It is a general rule with our translators to express LORD in capital letters, where it answers to Jehovah in the Hebrew, and there only. The word here is not Jehovah, but Adonai. It is however a name of God, though not incommunicable like the other, being frequently applied to kings and superiors. It properly implies authority and rule, as we say, A Lord and Master. In this connection it is undoubtedly a divine name. The Lord is said to come to his temple, to his own temple. It was a house consecrated to the God of Israel. The first temple he honoured with tokens of his presence; the second he visited in person; on which account it exceeded the first in glory. Messiah, therefore, who appeared in our nature, and was known amongst men as a man, and who is now worshipped both in heaven and upon earth, is the God of Israel. He came to his own. This

doctrine of God manifest in the flesh, is the pillar and ground of truth: the only foundation on which a sinner, who knows the just desert of his sin, can build a solid hope of salvation, is, that Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, 1 John v. 20. Unless this be admitted, the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, is unintelligible. To say that this doctrine approves itself to human reason in its present fallen depraved state, would be to contradict the apostle, who asserts, that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor xii. 3. But it is highly reasonable to those who see that they must perish, without such an atonement as shall declare the righteousness of God, no less than his mercy, in the forgiveness of sin; who feel the necessity of holiness in order to happiness; and are acquainted with the nature and variety of the snares, temptations, and enemies to which they are exposed. Such persons cannot venture their eternal concerns upon the dignity, or care, or power, or patience of a mere creature, however exalted and excellent; they must be assured that their Saviour is almighty, or they dare not trust in him; nor would they dare to honour the Son as they honour the Father, to love him with all their heart, and soul, and strength, to devote themselves absolutely to his service, and to expect their supreme happiness from his favour and approbation, if they did not know that he is over all, God blessed for ever.

With respect to the inferior character he sustains in our nature, and for our sakes, as the Father's servant, he is styled, The Messenger of the covenant. He is the gift, promise, head, and substance of the everlasting covenant. And he came himself to establish the covenant, and to declare and bestow the blessings it contained. God, who had before spoken at divers times and in sundry manners by his prophets, spoke in the fulness of time by his Son (Heb. i. 1); testifying to him by a voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, hear him; in him I am well pleased, Mat. iii. 17. To the same purpose our Lord spake of himself. He prefaced his gracious invitation to all, without exception, who are weary and heavy laden, to come to him for rest (Mat. xi. 27), with a declaration of his commission and authority, saying, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one (*solus*) knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." The law was given by Moses (John i. 17); the moral law, to discover the extent and abounding of sin; the ceremonial law, to point out, by typical sacrifices and ablutions, the way in which forgiveness was to be sought and obtained;—but grace, to relieve us from the condemnation of the one, and truth answerable to the types and shadows of the other, came by Jesus Christ.

It is farther said, "The Lord whom ye seek, and the Messenger in whom ye delight."—Messiah was the hope and desire of the true Israel of God, from the earliest times; and when he was born into the world, there was a prepared people waiting and longing for him, as their consolation. The people at large likewise professed to expect great things from the coming of Messiah. But their expectations were low and earthly. They supposed that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them victory and power over the heathen nations. The more grievous bondage of sin under which they were enslaved, they were not sensible of, nor had they a disposition suited to the privileges and honours of the kingdom which he designed to establish; and therefore, their understandings being darkened by prejudice and prepossession, they could not discern his character. The prophecies which were read in their synagogues every sabbath, marked out the time and circumstances of Messiah's appearance, the places which he should principally visit, the doctrine he should teach, and the works which he should perform: but though all these particulars exactly applied to Jesus, they obstinately rejected him, and proceeded to fulfil what was farther foretold of his sufferings and death, with such a minute punctuality, as if they had designedly taken the prophecies for the rule of their conduct. Thus, by giving neither more nor less than thirty pieces of silver to his betrayer, by buying the potter's field, and no other, with the money afterwards; by casting lots for one of his garments, and making a distribution of the rest; by piercing his side contrary to the custom in such punishments, and by omitting to break his legs, which, from their treatment of the malefactors who suffered with him, seems to have been usual—in these and several other instances, they acted, though unwittingly, as if it had been their design and study to accomplish the scriptures to their own confusion and condemnation.

II. This was the reason why his coming to his temple was to them sudden. Though long foretold and long expected, and though the precise time of his advent, and the accompanying signs, were accurately defined and described, yet when the season arrived, he came suddenly, unlooked for, and unknown. He came upon them in an hour that they thought not of, and in a manner of which they were not aware. When he stood in the midst of them, they knew not that it was he. How dreadfully does sin harden and infatuate the hearts of men! The Jews, in our Saviour's time, furnish us with a striking instance, that it is possible for people fatally to miscarry with the greatest advantages and means for

information in their possession. They accounted themselves the people of God, made their boast of his law, and their relation to Abraham. But they hated Messiah, and crucified him, who was the object of Abraham's faith. The opposition of their leaders and teachers was the most malicious, for many of them acted against the light of their minds, and were often convicted in their consciences, though they refused to be convinced. But an ignorant attachment to these blind guides was ruinous to their blind followers, who, though they sometimes, from a view of his mighty works were struck with astonishment and constrained to say, "Is not this the son of David?" were at length influenced by their priests to prefer a murderer to him, and, with a clamorous importunity, to compel Pilate to put him to death. The like misapprehensions produce the like effects among professed christians at this day. We likewise have the scriptures: but how many who admit their authority in words, live willingly ignorant of their contents, and act in direct contradiction to their tenor! The power of the Saviour is likewise displayed among us, his preached gospel is daily made effectual to the great purposes for which it is vouchsafed; yet multitudes reject it with no less pertinacity than the Jews rejected him in person. At length death surprises them, and they sink into darkness beyond recall. To them the Lord may be said to come suddenly, for they think not of him till they actually find themselves at his tribunal. And this not only when they are cut off by a sudden stroke, but often when their dissolution is most gradual, and every one about them can perceive its approach by their countenances; they themselves, though wasting with disease, and worn out with pain, still flatter themselves with hopes of amendment and recovery to their last gasp; and a lingering death is to them no less sudden than if they were killed by a flash of lightning.

III. It is asked, "Who may abide the day of his coming? The effect is compared to a refiner's fire, and to fuller's soap. The refiner's fire penetrates the metal, and thereby searches, discovers, and consumes the dross. The fuller's soap also, though it does not destroy the texture of the cloth, cleanses it, by removing, and as it were consuming the spots and defilement which are found in it. The idea conveyed by these illustrations is the same. The day of his coming is a day of trial, a trial which issues in the purification of the work of God in his church, and in the detection and destruction of every thing in it which is contrary to his will.

The coming of Messiah may be taken in several senses.

To the Jews, according to the promise of God repeated from age to age, he came in person. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, John i. 12. The term in the original alludes to the visible symbol of the divine presence, which resided in the tabernacle and temple. Thus for a season he resided among them, in a temple not made with hands, but formed, by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a virgin. This was a happy time to those who received and acknowledged him. But the bulk of the nation could not abide the trial which his appearance exposed them to, they were proved by it to be but reprobate and counterfeit silver. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed, Luke ii. 35. Many specious characters were detected. The pretended sanctity and outward strictness of the Scribes and Pharisees, was evidenced to be mere hypocrisy. He exposed them in their true colours, and upon many occasions put them to shame and to silence. And where his word did not cleanse like soap, it burnt like fire, and the persons and places that rejected him were rendered inexcusable. Their great privilege of seeing his wonderful works, and hearing his gracious words, being abused, aggravated their guilt and condemnation, and made their doom heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. To them the day of the Lord, which in their own sense they professed to desire was darkness, and not light, Amos, v. 18. If he had not come and spoken to them himself, they had not had sin, John xv. 22. That is, comparatively, he found them great sinners, and they would have been such if he had not visited them. But after he had spoken to them, and spoken in vain, they had no cloak for their sin. From that time they were deprived of every shadow of plea, excuse, or extenuation. And all their former wickedness was light, compared with the enormous crime they were guilty of in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. By refusing him, they rendered their case helpless and hopeless, because there is no other name but his, given among men, whereby they may be saved. But he cleansed those who received him, he removed their guilt, their fears, their ignorance. He gave them a clean heart and a new spirit. Yet to these also he was as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap. They likewise had prejudices and selfish tempers, which were not at once removed. He called them to a state of suffering and self-denial, to forsake all, and to take up their cross daily for his sake.

In another sense, his coming is not restrained to a particular time. Wherever his gospel is preached, the Lord is come. It is by the gospel he rides forth prosperously, conquering and to conquer, Psal. xlv. 4. Thus he has promised to be present with his ministers, and wherever two or three are met in his name, to the end of the world. Thus he is come to us. And the effects are the same as when he was personally upon earth. His gospel still discovers the thoughts of

many hearts. Many persons who till then were reputed religious, by the contempt they cast upon this wonderful expedient of infinite wisdom and love to save sinners, manifest their ignorance and hatred of the law and holiness of God, and that the religion they pretend to is an empty lifeless form, destitute of love and power. To them, though in itself a savour of life, it proves a savour of death. It provokes their enmity, increases their obduracy, and leaves them without excuse. But it is life indeed to those who receive it. They are raised by it from a death of sin, unto a life of righteousness and peace. Their tempers, desires, pursuits, and hopes are changed and elevated. Old things pass away, and all things become new to them, according as it is written, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17.

He comes to individuals by the power of his Spirit. This makes the word of his gospel effectual. For the kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power. When he thus visits the hearts of sinners, his word is like fire and soap; "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword," Heb. iv. 12. Then they feel and tremble, and cry out with the prophet, "Wo is me, I am undone!" But in this way their dross is consumed, their defilement removed. When he thus wounds, he likewise heals. He gives them faith; by faith they look unto him, and are enlightened and saved.

We surely expect that he will come again. Not as he once came, in a state of humiliation. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man of sorrows, who hung, and bled, and died upon the cross for our sins, will return in glory. "Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. i. 7. Concerning this day, emphatically called the day of the Lord, we may well say, "Who may abide it?" To those who have not been the subjects of his refining operations here, he will then be a consuming fire. That great day (for which all other days were made), "when the Lord shall descend with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up," Mal. iv. 1. Where, then, shall the impenitent ungodly sinner appear? But it will be a joyful day to them that love his appearing. He will arise upon them, as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings; he will wipe away their tears, vindicate their characters, acknowledge them before an assembled world, and say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," Matth. xxv. 34.

IV. It is particularly said, "He will purify the sons of Levi,—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." The sons of Levi, the priests, the officiating ministers of God, were gone out of the way, and had corrupted the covenant of the Lord, and thereby had caused many to stumble, Mal. ii. 8, 9. They dishonoured their office, and became themselves vile and contemptible. Thus they went on from bad to worse, till the men of that generation filled up the measure of the iniquity of their forefathers, by the rejection of Messiah. He also rejected them. The blasted barren fig-tree (Matth. xxi. 19.), which withered to the very root at his word, was an emblem of their condition. In a little time, wrath came upon them to the uttermost; they saw the temple in which they had trusted, and which they had profaned, destroyed by fire, and the greater part of them perished. But a remnant of them was purified. We read, that after his ascension, a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, Acts vi. 7. And his apostles and disciples were sent forth with a new spirit, and a new character, to offer and to serve in righteousness. The purport of this passage has been repeatedly exemplified under the christian dispensation. A declension from the simplicity and purity of worship, principles, and morals, was visible very early in the church. The progress of it was rapid, especially from the time of Constantine. When persecution ceased, and a tide of wealth and worldly honours flowed in upon those who, by their profession, were bound to be patterns of humility and self-denial to others; from that period, till the Reformation, ecclesiastical history affords us little more than a detail of such instances of pride, intrigue, oppression, and cruelty, under the pretext of religion, as had not been known among the heathens. And the nations which were relieved from the chains and darkness of Popery at the Reformation, did not long preserve much more than a name and a form to distinguish them. In most countries, the state became the idol of the church, and the church the creature of the state. How it is with us in this nation, I need not say. Facts speak for themselves. It is a mournful fact, that the ministry is become contemptible; nor is it difficult to assign the cause. But we are favoured with the gospel, and are eye-witnesses of its purifying power. It still produces the effects which marked its progress when it was preached by the apostles. It enlightens the dark mind, softens the hard heart, heals the wounded spirit; and many persons who before were burdensome to society, are rendered by it ornamental and useful. When every other argument and motive has failed of success, the consideration of the mercies of God in Christ, revealed by the gospel, constrains the believing sinner to present himself a living, willing, holy sacrifice unto God. Thus, being purified by the blood of Jesus, he offers to the Lord a sacrifice in righteousness. Such principles and aims are essential to a

christian minister. He knows the terrors of the Lord, and has tasted of his goodness. He is constrained by love, the love of Christ, and the love of souls. He preaches, as the apostle did, Jesus Christ, and him crucified; a subject which, though despised and reproached by the formal Jew and the sceptical Greek, is evidenced by its efficacy to be the wisdom and power of God. Such ministers may be, and frequently are, depreciated and disregarded; but they cannot be contemptible, until integrity, benevolence, and usefulness, are the proper objects of contempt.

SERMON V.

IMMANUEL.

Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, God with us. ISAIAH, vii. 14.

THERE is a signature of wisdom and power impressed upon the works of God, which evidently distinguishes them from the feeble imitations of men. Not only the splendour of the sun, but the glimmering light of the glowworm, proclaims his glory. The structure and growth of a blade of grass are the effects of the same power which produced the fabric of the heavens and the earth. In his word likewise he is inimitable. He has a style and manner peculiarly his own. What he is pleased to declare of himself by the prophet, may be prefixed as a proper motto to the whole revelation of his will in the Bible. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 8, 9. This superiority of his thoughts to ours, causes a proportionable difference in his manner of operation. His ways are above our conceptions, and often contrary to them. He sometimes produces great effects by means which, to us, appear unsuitable and weak. Thus he gave Gideon a complete victory, not by providing him an army equal to that of the enemy, but by three hundred men furnished with earthen pitchers and lamps, Judges vii. 19, 20. At other times the greatness of his preparations intimates that there are difficulties in the case, insuperable to any power but his own, where our narrow apprehensions, until enlightened and enlarged by his teaching, can scarcely perceive any difficulty. It is eminently so with respect to the restoration of fallen man to his favour. We have but slight thoughts of his holiness, and therefore are but slightly affected by the evil of sin. But though he be rich in mercy, no wisdom but his own could have proposed an expedient whereby the exercise of his mercy towards sinners might be made to correspond with his justice and truth, and with the honour of his moral government. His gospel reveals this expedient, and points out a way in which mercy and truth meet together; and his inflexible righteousness is displayed in perfect harmony with the peace of sinners who submit to his appointment; and thus God appears not only gracious but just, in receiving them to favour. This is the greatest of all his works, and exhibits the most glorious discovery of his character and perfections. The means are answerable to the grandeur of the design, and are summarily expressed in my text.

I shall not take up your time with attempting to clear the difficulties which have been observed in the context. It may suffice for my purpose to affirm, that this passage expressly and exclusively refers to the Messiah, for which my warrant is the authority of the evangelists Matthew and Luke (Matth. i. 23; Luke i. 31, 32), who directly apply it to him, and assure us that it was accomplished in him. If sinners are to be saved, without injury to the honour of his law and government (and otherwise they must perish), two things are necessary,

I. That a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son.

II. That this son of the virgin shall have a just right to be called Immanuel, God with us.

I. A virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son. The Mediator, the surety for sinful men, must himself be a man. Because those whom he came to redeem were partakers of flesh and blood, he therefore took part of the same. Had not Messiah engaged for us and appeared in our nature, a case would have occurred which I think we may warrantably deem incongruous to the divine wisdom. I mean, that while fire and hail, snow and vapour, and the stormy wind, fulfil the will of God, while the brutes are faithful to the instincts implanted in them by their Maker, a whole species of intelligent beings would have fallen short of the original law and design of their creation, and indeed have acted in direct and continual opposition to it. For the duty of man to love, serve, and trust God with all his heart and mind, and to love his neighbour as himself, is founded in the very nature and constitution of things, and necessarily results from his relation to God, and his absolute dependence on him as a creature. Such a disposition must undoubtedly have been as natural to man before his fall, as it is for a bird to fly, or a fish to swim. The prohibitory form of the law delivered to Israel from Mount Sinai, is a sufficient intimation that it was designed for sinners. Surely our first parents, while in a state of innocence, could not stand in need of warnings and threatening to restrain them from worshipping idols, or profaning the name

of the great God whom they loved. Nor would it have been necessary to forbid murder, adultery, or injustice, if his posterity had continued under the law of their creation, the law of love. But the first act of disobedience degraded and disabled man, detached him from his proper centre, if I may so speak, and incapacitated him both for his duty and his happiness. After his fall, it became impossible for either Adam or his posterity to obey the law of God. But Messiah fulfilled it exactly, as a man, and the principles of it are renewed, by the power of his grace, in all who believe on him. And though their best endeavours fall short, his obedience to it is accepted on their behalf, and he will at length perfectly restore them to their primitive order and honour. When they shall see him as he is, they will be like him, and all their powers and faculties will be perfectly conformed to his image.

Again, Messiah must not only be a man, but a partaker of our very nature. It had been equally easy to the power of God to have formed the body of the second Adam, as he formed the first, out of the dust of the earth. But though, in this way, he would have been a true and perfect man, he would not have been more nearly related to us than to the angels. Therefore, when God sent forth his Son to be made under the law, to redeem us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the adoption of children (Gal iv. 4, 5), and be re-admitted into his happy family, he was made of a woman. Thus he became our Goel, our near kinsman, with whom the right of redemption lay.

But farther, if he had derived his human nature altogether in the ordinary way, from sinful parents, we see not how he could have avoided a participation in that defilement and and depravity which the fall of Adam had entailed upon all his posterity. But his body, that holy thing, conceived and born of a virgin, was the immediate production of God. Therefore he was perfectly pure and spotless, and qualified to be such a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. vii. 26); who needed not, as the typical high-priests of Israel, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sin, and then for the sins of the people, Heb. vii. 27. These difficulties were obviated by a virgin's conceiving and bearing a son. His obedience was without defect, his nature without blemish, and, having no sin of his own, when he voluntarily offered himself to make an atonement for the sins of his people, his sacrifice was, so far, answerable to the strict and extensive demands of the law and justice of God.

Let us make a solemn pause, and call upon our souls to admire and adore the wisdom and power of God in this appointment. Thus the Lord created a new thing upon the earth!

II. But surely our admiration and gratitude will be raised still higher, if we rightly understand the latter part of my text. This son of the virgin shall be called Immanuel, God with us. Though the human nature of Christ was absolutely perfect, his obedience commensurate to the utmost extent of the law, and his substitution and sufferings for sinners voluntary, yet, had he been no more than a man, he would not have been equal to the great undertaking of saving sinners. A due consideration of the majesty, holiness, authority, and goodness of God will make sin appear to be, as the apostle expresses it, exceedingly sinful, Rom. vii. 13. Whoever has a right sense of the nature and effects of that rebellion against the Most High, which the scripture intends by the term sin, will not need many arguments to convince him that the Mediator between God and man must be possessed of such dignity and power as cannot be attributed to a creature without destroying the idea of a created and dependent being, by ascribing to him those perfections which are incommunicably divine.

If Messiah had been a sinless and perfect man, and no more, he might have yielded a complete obedience to the will of God, but it could have been only for himself. The most excellent and exalted creature cannot exceed the law of his creation. As a creature, he is bound to serve God with his all, and his obligations will always be equal to his ability. But an obedience acceptable and available for others, for thousands and millions, for all who are willing to plead it, must be connected with a nature which is not thus necessarily bound. A sinner, truly convinced of his obnoxiousness to the displeasure of God, must sink into despair, notwithstanding the intimation of a saviour, if he were not assured by the scrip ture that it was a divine person in the human nature who engaged for us. It is this alone affords a solid ground for hope, to know that he who was before all, by whom all things were made, and by whom they consist, assumed the nature of man; that the great Lawgiver himself submitted to be under his own law. This wonderful condescension gave an immense value and dignity to all that he did, to all that he suffered: thus he not only satisfied but honoured the law. So that we may, without hesitation, affirm, that the law of God was more honoured by Messiah, in his obedience to it, during the few years of his residence upon earth, and terminated by his last and highest act of obedience in submitting to the death of the cross, than it could have been by the unsinning obedience of all mankind to the end of time.

But Messiah was not only to obey the law for us, but he was likewise to expiate, to sustain, and to exhaust the curse due to sin, Gal. iii. 13. In this attempt no mere creature could have endured. Nor could the sufferings of a creature have been proposed to

the universe, to angels, and men, as a consideration sufficient to vindicate the righteousness and truth of God in the remission of sin, after he had determined and solemnly declared that the wages of sin is death. The apostle assures us that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, Heb. x. 4. They who differ from the apostle in their judgment, who think it very possible for God, if he pleased, to forgive the sinner who should offer a bull or a goat, or even without any offering, by the sovereign exercise of his mercy, may be reminded that the question is not simply what God can do, but what it becomes him to do, agreeable to his perfections, and to his character as governor of the world. Of this his infinite wisdom is the only competent judge; and we learn from his word, that it is impossible any blood, but that of his own Son, can cleanse us from guilt, or save us from misery. The blood of a bull or a goat, of a man or an angel (if angels could bleed), are all equally insufficient to the great purpose of declaring his righteousness, of manifesting to all intelligent creatures his inflexible displeasure against sin, in the very act of affording mercy to sinners. But since the atoning blood is the blood of Immanuel, of him who is God with us; the sinner who makes it his plea, builds his hope upon a rock which cannot be removed; and obtaining forgiveness in this way, he likewise obtains by it such a knowledge of the heinousness of sin, as disposes him from that hour to fear, hate, and forsake it.

But though forgiveness be an essential part of salvation, it is not the whole. We cannot be happy, except the power of sin be likewise destroyed. A well-grounded hope in the mercy of God, is connected with a thirst for sanctification, and a conformity to his image. But neither this hope nor this desire is natural to us. Our case requires the help of an almighty arm, of the power which can cause the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dead to arise; which can take away the heart of stone, and create a heart of flesh. So likewise the difficulties attendant on our christian profession, arising from the spirit of the world around us, the snares to which we are exposed in every situation, our weakness, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the subtilty, vigilance, and power of our spiritual enemies, are so many and great, that unless he, on whom we depend for salvation, be able to save to the uttermost, we can have no security, either for our progress, or our perseverance, in the grace of God. Unless the Saviour of sinners be omnipresent, omniscient, unchangeable, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," that is, unless he be God, how can he answer the prayers, satisfy the wants, and relieve the distresses of all who trust in him in every age, and of all who in every place equally need his support at the same moment? Or how can he engage to give rest to every weary soul, to secure them from perishing, and to bestow upon them eternal life? David comfortably concluded, that because the Lord was his shepherd, he should not want, and had no reason to fear (Psal. xxiii. 1. 4.), not even when passing through the valley of the shadow of death. To us Jesus is made known as the great shepherd of the sheep; but we can we place the like confidence in him, unless we likewise are assured that our shepherd is the Lord?

I shall not attempt to vindicate this doctrine largely from the exceptions of those who call themselves men of reason. It is a point of revelation, and it is expressly revealed. It demands our assent upon the authority of God, who requires us to receive this record which he has given us of his Son. Thus far it approves itself to our reason, that however difficult it may be to our conceptions, yet thus it must be, upon a supposition that sinners can be saved without prejudice to the honour of the divine government. If we affirm, that he who was born in a stable, and suffered as a malefactor upon Mount Calvary, is the true God and eternal life, many will think it a hard saying. But it is the doctrine of scripture, the very pillar and ground of truth; the only foundation of hope for an awakened conscience, the only standard by which we can properly estimate the evil of sin, the worth of the soul, and the love of God. We do not, however, say, that the human nature of Christ, considered in itself, possesses the attributes of Deity, or is the proper object of worship; nor do we suppose that God could suffer, bleed, or die. But we say with the apostle, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. We believe that the human nature was so intimately and indissolubly united to the divine, that the properties and actings of each nature are justly ascribed to the one person of Christ, God-man, Immanuel, God with us. Thus we read that the final judgment of the world is committed to a *man*, and that God hath purchased his church with his *own blood*, Acts xvii. 31; xx. 28.

Behold then the character of Messiah in this prophecy! a man! a God! a divine person in the human nature! God manifested in the flesh! Immanuel, God with us!

As fallen creatures, we had lost the true knowledge of God, and were unable to form such conceptions of his greatness and goodness, as are necessary to inspire us with reverence, to engage our confidence, or produce obedience to his will. His glory shines in the heavens and fills the earth; we are surrounded by the tokens of his power and presence; yet, till we are instructed by his word, and enlightened by his Holy Spirit, he is to us an unknown God. The prevalence of idolatry was early, and (with an exception to the

people of Israel) soon became universal. Men who boasted of their reason, worshipped the sun and moon, yea, the works of their own hands, instead of the Creator. And even where revelation is vouchsafed, the bulk of mankind live without God in the world. But he is known, trusted, and served, by those who know Messiah. To them his glory is displayed in the person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. His agency is perceived in the creation, his providence is acknowledged, and his presence felt as God with us.

As fallen creatures, God is against us, and we are against him. The alienation of our hearts is the great cause of our ignorance of him. We are willingly ignorant. The thoughts of him are unwelcome to us, and we do not like to retain him in our knowledge. Guilt is the parent of atheism. A secret foreboding, that if there be a God, we are obnoxious to his displeasure; and that if he takes cognizance of our conduct, we have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from him, constrains many persons to try to persuade themselves that there is no God; and many more to think, or at least to wish, that if there be a God, he does not concern himself with human affairs. What a proof is this of the enmity of the heart of man against him; that so many persons who would tremble at the thought of being in a ship, driven by the winds and waves, without compass or pilot, should yet think it desirable, if it were possible, to be assured, that in a world like this, so full of uncertainty, trouble, and change, all things were left at random, without the interference of a supreme governor! But this enmity, these dark apprehensions, are removed, when the gospel is received by faith. For it brings us the welcome news, that there is forgiveness with him; that God is reconciled in his Son to all who seek his mercy. In this sense, likewise, Messiah is Immanuel, God with us, on our side, no longer the avenger of sin, but the author of salvation.

Immanuel is God with us, God in our nature still. He suffered as a man, and as a man he now reigns on the throne of glory; exercising all power and authority, and receiving all spiritual worship both in heaven and upon earth. He is the head of all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions. Thus man is not only saved, but unspeakably honoured and ennobled. He is brought into the nearest relation to him, who is over all blessed for ever. The angels adore him; only redeemed sinners can say, "He loved us, and gave himself for us; he has washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Gal. ii. 20; Rev. i. 5); he is our Saviour, our shepherd, our Immanuel, God with us.

I shall conclude with a few obvious reflections which offer from this important subject.

1. What a cold assent is paid to the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ by many who profess and receive it as a truth! They have received from education, from books or ministers, what is called an orthodox scheme of religious sentiments, and with this they are contented. They have not been accustomed to doubt of it, and therefore take it for granted that they really believe it. But as I have already hinted, it is so contrary to our natural apprehensions, that no man can, from his heart, say that Jesus Christ is Lord, unless he be taught of God. And a cordial belief of this point will and must produce great and abiding effects. They who know the Saviour's name, will so trust in him, as to renounce every other ground of confidence. They will love him supremely, and forsake every thing that stands in competition with his favour. They will glory in his cross, they will espouse his cause, and devote themselves to his service. They will make continual application to him, that they may receive out of his fulness grace according to their need. They will obey his precepts, and walk in his Spirit. Happy were it, indeed, if all who join in repeating the Creed, and who bow their knee at the mention of his name, were thus minded. But the lives, tempers, and pursuits of thousands, give too sure an evidence, that when they express their assent with their lips, they neither know what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Their acknowledgment of his character, has no more salutary influence, than that of the evil spirits when he was upon earth, who said and perhaps with a much fuller conviction, "We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God," Mark i. 24.

2. What a strong foundation does this doctrine afford for the faith and hope of those who indeed know Messiah, and have put their trust in him! This truth is the rock upon which the church is built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" The difficulties of our warfare are great, the enemies of our peace are many. The world may frown, and Satan will rage, but Jesus has overcome the world, and is greater than all our foes. He will guide his people with his unerring wisdom, support them with his almighty arm, supply them out of the inexhaustible riches of his grace, revive them when fainting, heal them when wounded, plead for them above as their great high priest, manage for them upon earth as their great shepherd, and at last make them more than conquerors, and give them a crown of life.

3. On the contrary, how dreadful must be the state of those who finally reject him, and say in their hearts, "We will not have this man to rule over us!" He is now proposed as a Saviour, he invites sinners to come to him, that they may have life, and assures us, "that him that cometh he will in nowise cast out," John vi. 37. Happy are they who hear an-

obey his voice to-day, while it is called to-day. To-morrow is uncertain. Death may be at the door, and at death our state will be determined for eternity. They who refuse him now, in the character of a Saviour, must then appear at his tribunal, and stand before him as their Judge; and must answer, in their own persons, for all their transgressions of the holy law, and for their contempt of the gospel of the grace of God.

SERMON VI.

SALVATION PUBLISHED FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountains: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

ISAIAH, xl. 9.

IT would be improper to propose an alteration, though a slight one, in the reading of a text, without bearing my testimony to the great value of our English version, which I believe, in point of simplicity, strength, and fidelity is not likely to be excelled by a new translation of the whole scriptures. But there are undoubtedly particular passages where a small change in the expression might render the sense clearer, and be equally answerable to the original Hebrew or Greek. The address of this verse as it stands in the Messiah is, "O thou that tellest good tidings," &c. as the Bishop of London has lately translated it. Zion and Jerusalem are considered by the prophet, not as bringing, but as receiving good tidings; and the publisher of these good tidings is written with a feminine construction. The sense may be thus expressed, "Let her that bringeth good tidings to Jerusalem and Zion, get up into the high mountains and lift up her voice." But the apostrophe is more animated. That it was the custom in Israel for the women to publish and celebrate good news with songs and instruments is well known. We have an early instance in the book of Exodus. When the Lord had delivered them from the power of Pharaoh, and they saw their enemies, who had so lately threatened them, dead upon the sea-shore, Miriam, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea," Exod. xv. 20, 21. So afterwards, when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out to meet him and Saul, with tabrets and instruments of music; and they answered one another as they played, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. Thus likewise Deborah, in her sublime song, represents the mother of Sisera (Judges v. 28, 29) and her women singing alternately, from a confident, though vain expectation, that Sisera would return a conqueror. In my text, the prophet, in prospect of Messiah's appearance, speaks of it as an event suited to excite a general joy. The gospel (as the word imports) is good news, glad tidings indeed! the best news that ever reached the ears, or cheered the heart of man. The women are therefore called upon to proclaim his approach, on the tops of the hills and mountains, from whence they may be seen and heard to the greatest advantage, for the spreading of the tidings throughout the whole country. Zion is as a besieged city, but let her know that relief is at hand; say unto her, "Behold your God!" The Lord God will come with a strong hand, or against the strong one, and his people shall know him as their shepherd, full of care, kindness, and power.

The promise of Immanuel, God with us, is now to be spread like the morning from the tops of the mountains. The day is breaking, and this passage prepares for the following, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" The welcome news is to be dispersed from Jerusalem to Samaria, from Jew to Gentile, from one kingdom to another people, till all the nations and ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God, Psal. xcviii. 3.

The cause of this exultation arises from the character of Messiah, compared with the design of his appearance, and this is answerable to the condition in which he finds mankind.

The deplorable state of fallen man by nature is largely described both in the Old Testament and in the New. It may suffice to take notice of three principal features which characterise our whole species, and apply to every individual of the race of Adam, until the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, affords relief. These are guilt, alienation of heart, and misery.

1. Guilt.—All have sinned. We are the creatures of God. He made us, and he preserves us. Our life, faculties, and comforts are all from him. He is therefore our great Lord, our supreme benefactor. Of course we belong to him. His we are, and not our own. It follows, that dependence, gratitude, submission, and obedience are incumbent on us, as they must be upon all intelligent creatures, from the very nature of things. The relation which subsists between an infinitely wise and good Creator and his creatures, if capable of knowing him, necessarily implies this subjection; and the obligation is indissoluble. But we have evidently broken this law of our creation. We have violated the order of God's government. We have implicitly, if not formally, renounced our allegiance, disowned

his right over us, and set up for ourselves. A dependent creature affecting independence; a worm presuming upon its own power, making itself its own end; a rebel against the divine government, boasting of morality and goodness, and trusting to his own conduct to recommend him to the favour of his Maker; a being formed for immortality, proposing his whole happiness in things which he feels to be unsatisfying, knows to be uncertain, and from which he is conscious he must, in a few years at most, be finally removed: these are solecisms which strongly prove the depravity, degeneracy, and demerit of man. It is possible that, had we been wholly left to ourselves, we should never have been aware, while in this world, of the just and inevitable consequences of our rebellion. Having lost all right thoughts of God, and conceiving of him, as if he were altogether like ourselves, we might have felt neither fear nor remorse. But there is a revelation, by which we are informed of his determined purpose to avenge disobedience, and to vindicate the honour of his government; and we are assured that he is not an indifferent spectator of our opposition to his established order. His justice and truth are engaged to punish transgressors, and our obnoxiousness to punishment is what we mean by guilt. If the scripture be true there is no way of escape, unless he himself be pleased to appoint one. This he has done, and the declaration of this appointment is a part of the good tidings contained in my text. Proclaim it from the tops of the mountains that there is forgiveness with him. Say unto Jerusalem, Behold Messiah! Behold your God! He comes to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26. He can do it, for he is God; and he will do it, for he has taken on him our nature for this very purpose, 2 Cor. v. 21. Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!

2. Alienation of mind.—Not only is it true that we have sinned against the Lord, but a principle of aversion from him is deeply rooted in our hearts. Therefore one part of our natural character is, haters of God, Rom. i. 30. This is thought a hard saying. Many who will admit that their conduct is blameable, and that they are not altogether what they ought to be, will by no means plead guilty to this charge. If they fall short of their duty, and in some instances transgress his commandments, they say it is their infirmity, they are sorry, and hope to do better some time or other. However, they are willing to think that their hearts are tolerably good, they mean well, and are shocked at the idea of hating God. They rather presume that they love him, though they are not so careful to please him as they should be. I do not assert that we hate God under that character which our vain imaginations form of him. If we can persuade ourselves, in direct contradiction to the testimony of scripture, that he is not strict to mark what is amiss; that he will dispense with the strictness of his law; that he will surely have mercy upon us, because we are not openly abandoned and profligate in our conduct; that he will accept of lip-worship, in which the heart has no concern, reward us for actions in which we had no intention of pleasing him, permit us to love and serve the world with all our mind, and soul, and strength, while we live, and make us happy in another world, when we can live in this no longer. If we form such an image of God, it is too much like our own to provoke our enmity, for it is destitute of holiness, justice, and truth. But the carnal mind is and must be enmity against God (Rom. viii. 7), according to the character he has given of himself in his word. We have an inbred dislike to all his moral attributes, to the rule of his government, and to the methods of his grace. We cannot, that is, we will not propose either his glory as our chief end, or his favour as our chief good. The proof is plain. The ends which we actually pursue, and the supposed good which we deliberately prefer, are utterly inconsistent with the plan which he has prescribed for us. His ways, though truly pleasant in themselves, appear unpleasing to us, and we think we can plan better for ourselves. We do not like to retain God in our thoughts (Rom. i. 28), which is a sure sign of enmity. Nay, this enmity is so strong in us naturally that we cannot bear others should think more highly of God than we do, or be more attached to him than we are. This was the ground of the first murder. Abel loved God, and God was pleased to testify his approbation of Abel, and therefore Cain killed him, 1 John iii. 12. This has been the great cause of the opposition and ill-treatment which the servants of God have met with from the men of the world in all succeeding ages; a cause which still subsists, and will continue to operate upon posterity yet unborn. Can we shew a stronger mark of dislike to a person than by hating all who profess a regard to him, and when that is the only cause of our resentment? Such is the prevailing enmity against God. For how often do we see, that, when his grace enables a sinner to forsake the spirit and practice of the world, his former friends are immediately offended, and perhaps those of his own household become his inveterate enemies?

But, O thou that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice! Say to poor sinners, Behold your God! He comes to take this enmity away! The cross of Christ subdues it, when every other expedient has been found ineffectual. The heart, too hard to be softened by a profusion of temporal benefits, and too stout to be subdued by afflictions, is melted by the dying love of a Saviour, and by that discovery of the divine perfections which is

exhibited in redemption. We have a striking instance of this effect, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, Acts ix. 1—20. His misguided conscience, under the influence of prejudice, persuaded him, that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth. Instigated with rage, and not satisfied with the injuries he had offered to his disciples at Jerusalem, but still breathing out threatnings and slaughter, he journeyed towards Damascus, designing to harass and persecute them wherever he found them. In this temper of mind, he was suddenly arrested on his way, by a light, and a voice from heaven. He fell to the ground. But Jesus, whom he had ignorantly persecuted, instructed him in the knowledge of his person and love, pardoned his sin, and commissioned him to preach the faith he had laboured to destroy. How sudden, how evident, how abiding was the change which then took place in his heart and in his conduct! From that moment he accounted "all things loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord," Phil. iii. 8. Unwearied by labour and hardship, undismayed by opposition and danger, he spent the remainder of his life in the cause of his Master; and like Cæsar, accounting nothing done while any thing remained to do, his active and intrepid spirit was continually meditating new services, Acts xix. 21. And, though he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place, he was always upon the wing to publish to his fellow-sinners the grace and glory of him whom he had so long opposed, only because he knew him not. And although the circumstances attending the apostle's case were extraordinary, the case itself, as to the substance, is not singular. I trust many persons in this assembly have been the subjects of a like change. The doctrine which Paul preached, has enlightened your understandings, has inspired you with hopes and desires to which you were once strangers, and given a new direction to the conduct and aims of your life. You were once afar off from God, but you are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. You once lived to yourselves, but now you feel that you are no longer your own, and have devoted yourselves to him who died to save you from the present evil world, and from the wrath to come.

3. Misery.—If we are guilty in the sight of God, and alienated from him in our hearts, we must be miserable. Guilt entails a burden, and a foreboding of evil upon the conscience. And our alienation from the fountain of living waters (Jer. ii. 13) compels us (for we are insufficient to our own happiness) to seek our resources from broken cisterns, and pits which will hold no water. Further, sin has filled the world with woe. The whole creation travails and groans; and natural evil is inseparable from moral, as the shadow from the body. Though the earth be filled with tokens of the goodness, patience, and forbearance of God, it likewise abounds with marks of his displeasure. I think we have sufficient reason to attribute earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, and pestilence, to sin as their original and proper cause. We can hardly conceive, that if mankind had continued in that happy state of love and obedience to God, in which our first parents were created, they would have been exposed to such calamities. When God at the beginning, surveyed every thing that he had made, "behold it was very good," Gen. i. 31. All was beauty and harmony, till sin introduced disorder and a curse. But far worse than what we suffer immediately from the providence of God, are the evils which we bring upon ourselves and upon each other. The dreadful consequences of war, rapine, discord, hatred, ambition, avarice, and intemperance, furnish part of every page in the mournful history of human life, and are felt in every nation, city, village, and family. Want, cares, and diseases, prey upon individuals. Disappointment, dissatisfaction, vanity, and vexation of spirit, are experienced by persons of every rank, and in every stage of human life. How much more desirable would it be, were it not for the hope of the gospel, to share with the brute creation, than to bear the name of man in his fallen state! The brutes have few wants; their propensities and the means of gratifying them, are suited to their natures, adapted to their powers, and conducive to the preservation of the species. They neither regret the past, nor tremble under apprehensions of the future. It is far otherwise with man. His boasted pleasures end with a sting, and often he cannot bear his own reflections on them. He suffers almost as much from imaginary fears, as from real afflictions. The more he possesses, the more are the sources of his anxieties multiplied and enlarged. And after having been long wearied with a train of mortifications, pains, and inquietudes, he must at last, however unwilling, yield to that stroke of death, the thought of which, when strongly realized to his mind, was always sufficient to embitter the happiest hours of his life.

But publish the glad tidings from the mountains, and let the joyful sound diffuse over the plain.—Your God cometh! Messiah establishes a new, a spiritual kingdom upon the earth, and his happy subjects are freed from the misery in which they were involved. They commit all their concerns to him, and he manages for them. Their fears are removed, their irregular desires corrected, and all that is really good for them, is secured to them by his love, promise, and care. Afflictions still await them, but they are sanctified. To them the nature of affliction is changed. They are appointments graciously designed for their advantage. Their crosses, no less than their comforts, are tokens of God's fa-

vour (Heb. xii. 6, 7); they have them only because their present situation requires discipline, and they could not be so well without them. They are assured of support under them (2 Cor. xii. 9), and a final deliverance out of them all: for there is a happy hour approaching, when all their troubles shall cease, and they shall enter upon a state of eternal, uninterrupted, inconceivable joy, (Isa. lx. 20; Rev. xxi. 4.

For these purposes the Son of God was revealed. The prophets saw his day afar off, and proclaimed his approach.—Thy God cometh! Though truly a man, he is truly God. Neither man nor angel could remove our guilt, communicate to us a spiritual life, relieve us from misery, and give us stable peace in a changing world, hope and triumph in death, and eternal life beyond it. But his wisdom and power are infinite, and his purpose unchangeable. He would not have invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him, if he was not able and determined to give them rest. None that seek him are disappointed, or sent empty away: a sufficient proof that his compassion, his bounty, his fulness are properly divine. Therefore the apostle, speaking of the riches of his grace, uses the epithet, "unsearchable," Ephes. iii. 8. His treasury of life and salvation is inexhaustible, like a boundless, shoreless, bottomless ocean; like the sun, which having cheered the successive generations of mankind with his beams, still shines with undiminished lustre, is still the fountain of light, and has always a sufficiency to fill innumerable millions of eyes in the same instant.

Does the language of my text cause joy to spring up in your hearts? or is it nothing to you? If you heard the Messiah you were, perhaps, affected by the music of the passage; how much are you to be pitied, if you were hitherto unaffected by the sentiment! Yet once more, hear,—Thy God cometh! He did come in the fulness of time, according to the prophecy, and the word of prophecy assures us that he will come again. "Behold he cometh in the clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, Rev. i. 7.—Prepare to meet thy God, Amos, iv. 12.

SERMON VII

THE MORNING LIGHT.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee: and the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Isaiah, lx. 1—3.

One strong internal proof that the Bible is a divine revelation, may be drawn from the subject-matter, and particularly that it is the book, and the only book, which teaches us to think highly and honourably of God. I say the only book, for there is no right knowledge of God where the Bible is not known. What is the Jupiter of Homer, compared with the God of Israel, as he is represented to us by his servants the prophets? And if the heathen philosophers, in some detached passages, have sentiments not altogether unworthy of him, history honestly tells us how they obtained them. They travelled, and they are generally said to have travelled into Phœnicia or Egypt, to the confines of that people who alone thought rightly of God, because to them only he had made himself known by a revelation. If such a description as we have in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, from the twelfth verse to the end, had been known only of late years, recovered, we will suppose, out of the ruins of Herculaneum, there is little doubt but it would have engaged the attention and admiration of the learned world. For the most admired writings of antiquity, upon a candid comparison, are unspeakably inferior to it. The inimitable sublimity of the prophets is natural, just, and unforced, and flows from the grandeur of their subjects, because they were influenced by him who alone can speak worthily of himself.

> A song so vast, a theme so high,
> Calls for the voice that tuned the sky.

With them, the whole compass of the creation is but as dust upon the balance, in respect of the great Creator. His purpose is fate, his voice is power. He speaks and it is done. Thus he called the universe into being; and thus, as the great Lord and proprietor of all, he still maintains and governs it, directing the frame of nature, and every particular event and contingence, to the promoting of his own glory, the last and highest end of all his works.

The principal of these is, the exhibition of his perfections in the person of his Son. The prophecies we have already considered announce this event, with a gradual increase of clearness and precision, as the period of accomplishment

is supposed to draw nigh. We lately heard the command to proclaim his approach from the hills and the tops of the mountains. Here the prophet begins to contemplate the effects of his actual appearance. The earth is considered as involved in a state of gross darkness, but the sun, the Sun of righteousness is about to arise, and to fill it by his beams, with light, life, and glory. These effects, indeed, will not extend to all, for many will love darkness rather than light. But he will not shine in vain. There will be a people prepared to receive him, and to rejoice in his light. They shall arise as from sleep, as from the grave, and his light reflected upon them shall cause them to shine likewise. Darkness shall still cover those who reject him; yea, their darkness will be increased. But the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon all who believe, and their numbers, from age to age, shall be enlarged. Nations shall come to him, and kings shall be subservient to the spreading of his kingdom. Such is the scope of the passage before us. I shall briefly consider a few of the leading particulars contained in it.

I. As the sun is the source of light to the natural world, so is Messiah to the moral and spiritual world. Light, and its opposite, darkness, are figuratively used in scripture. The latter is applied to a state of ignorance, sin, and misery, as in the following texts. "He that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth," John xii. 35. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 6. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matth. xxv. 30. The former, therefore, signifies true knowledge, holiness, and happiness. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light," Eph. v. 8. "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me," Micah vii. 8. "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart," Psal. xcvii. 11. I select but one instance of each kind; an attentive reader of the scriptures will meet with many expressions of a like import. But there is likewise an intermediate state; light advancing from the early dawn to the perfect day. This twilight, no less than day-light is from the sun. Such was the state of the Old Testament church. Messiah was the source of their knowledge, hope, and joy; but he was (if I may so speak) below the horizon as to them. Though believers under that dispensation were a people saved of the Lord, they were trained up under types and shadows, were influenced by a spirit of comparative bondage and distance, like children under age, and rather longed for than actually possessed the gracious liberty which the children of God enjoy under the gospel. But the sun arose, and the shadows vanished, when the Son of God incarnate dwelt and conversed with men, honoured his temple with his personal presence, and superseded all the Levitical sacrifices, by the one offering of himself upon the cross. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." But more especially we date the beginning of his visible kingdom from the day of Pentecost, which followed his ascension. Then he signally bestowed the gifts which, as mediator, he had received for men, and, by the power of his Holy Spirit, authorized and qualified his servants to go forth and preach salvation in his name. Then the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken away, and his righteousness was openly shown in the sight of the Heathen. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and other servants of God, had been highly favoured and highly honoured; but we are assured by our Lord himself, that none born of woman had been greater than John his forerunner—and yet he added, "the least in the kingdom of heaven," that is, in the New-Testament or gospel-church, "is greater than he," Math. xi. 11. The apostles were happy in the peculiar privilege of attending on his person, yet he told them, "it is expedient for you that I go away," John xvi. 7. There were still greater privileges depending upon the influence of the promised Comforter, who was to abide with the church for ever. By the power of his Holy Spirit, the Lord is now present with all his ministers and people in every place, whether retired in secret from the view of men, or assembled together in his name (Matth. vi. 6, xviii. 20, xxviii. 20); and though the great events upon which their hopes are founded, his life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension took place long ago, he so realises the declaration of them in his word to their hearts, that they are no less assured of what they read than the apostles, who saw him with their own eyes. Thus the gospel-state is a dispensation of light. The Sun is risen with life and healing in his beams, and they who have the eyes of their understanding opened, enjoy a bright and marvellous day. They see, admire, adore, rejoice, and love.

II. The subjects of Messiah's kingdom, the living members of his church, are so irradiated by him that they shine likewise, as the moon shines, but with a borrowed light derived from the sun. Beholding, in this glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18), according to the measure and growth of their faith. Two points may be observed under this head.

1. The fact that they do thus shine. Though they were once darkness, they are now light, Ephesians, v. 8. A dark, ignorant, wicked, selfish christian is a contradiction in terms. There may be such, there are too many such, amongst those who make a profession of the name of Christ; but they who truly know

him walk in the light, as he is in the light. They have knowledge, a good understanding, Psal. cxi. 10. Perhaps the greater part of real christians have little acquaintance with the literature and science of the world: their moral capacities may be weak, and not improved by education; they may be in the esteem of men, as they are in their own, but babes; yet they know more than the wisest philosophers who are destitute of the grace of God. They know themselves, they know the Lord, they know the evil of sin, and the way of salvation; what their proper happiness consists in, and how it is to be obtained. They have learned to endure affliction, to forgive injuries, and to overcome evil with good. They have attained a just sense of the vanity of the world and the importance of eternity. They are instructed to be contented and useful in their stations, to discharge their duties in relative life with propriety, and to meet death with comfort. In all these particulars, many who have dazzling talents, and are celebrated for abilities and endowments, are miserably at a loss. True believers are conformed to the spirit and temper of their Saviour, and therefore are different and distinguished from the world around them. And they have, at least, the beginnings of true peace and solid happiness, in communion with him whom they serve.

2. The cause.—They shine wholly by his light. If their own words may be taken, the proof of this is easy. They are free to confess that they are wise only by his wisdom, strong by his power working in them, and that without him they have not sufficiency to think a good thought, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Experience has taught them that they cannot stand unless he upholds them, nor watch unless he watcheth with them, nor be safe or happy a single day without fresh communications from him. But this their experience and acknowledgment is the express and current doctrine of scripture. There is a real, though mystical union between Christ and his people. He is the vine (John xv. 1), they the branches: he is their head, they the members of his body. They dwell in him by faith, he dwells in them by his Spirit. He is their root and their life; all their springs are in him, and it is out of his fulness that they receive, John i. 16. Therefore the apostle says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me," 2 Cor. xii. 9. And our Lord himself, who comforted Paul with that promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," apprised all his followers of their entire dependence upon him, by saying, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. The language of the Old Testament is to the same purport. "They looked unto him and were enlightened," Psal. xxxiv. 5. "In the Lord Jehovah I have righteousness and strength," Isaiah xlv. 24. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," Isaiah xl. 29. Thus things are constituted and conducted, that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

III. They who wilfully refuse and turn from this light, do thereby involve themselves in double darkness, and become more infatuated and wicked than those to whom the light has not been proposed. Their evils, likewise, are more aggravated than they would have been if the light had not visited them. Thus our Lord Messiah speaks of the Jews, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin," John xv. 22. And again, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind," John ix. 39. He came to make the ignorant wise unto salvation; but they who, from a proud conceit of their own wisdom and sufficiency, disdain his instruction, being left to themselves, give abundant evidence that the light they boast of is but gross and palpable darkness. The grossest errors, the greatest obduracy of heart, the most extreme profaneness of spirit, and the most abominable wickedness in practice, may be expected, and will certainly be found where the gospel is despised.

It is evident, that the morality which is so highly admired by the christian world, and set in opposition to the gospel of Christ, is much leaner and more scanty than the morality of the Heathens. I speak of the idea only; for neither have the Heathens of old, nor of the present day, acted up to their own rules. But I do not hesitate to affirm, that none of our modern moralists who have disowned the gospel revelation, have given us a system of morality equal to that of Tully the Pagan. Many of the Heathens acknowledged the desirableness and necessity of revelation; though infidels, born in a christian land, think it a high mark of their wisdom to despise it; and avowed atheists, that is, men who deny either the being or the providence of God, or the obligations mankind are under to obey him, are seldom to be met with but in countries where the Bible is known. The heart must have obstinately and repeatedly resisted light and conviction, before it can ordinarily proceed to these dreadful lengths. But while the blind stumble in the noon of day, Messiah's people shall walk in confidence and peace (Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16.), and shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, Phil. ii. 15.

IV. The third verse of this chapter foretells, and therefore secures, the conversion of the Gentiles or Heathens. The times and the seasons are in the disposal of God, but the scriptures must be fulfilled. Much was done in the first age of christianity. A single in-

strument, the apostle Paul, as he himself informs us, preached the faith, which he formerly laboured to destroy, "from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum" (Rom. xv. 19.), and probably much farther afterwards. And the Lord, who appointed him to this service, accompanied his message with his own power; so that he had signal success, in turning men from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God; and in planting the gospel, and gathering churches in every province. The gospel found an early reception at Rome, which facilitated its spread into the different parts of the Roman empire. And we have reason to believe it was introduced into our island in a few years after our Lord's ascension. And though what was called the conversion of heathen nations in some following ages, went little farther than to prevail on them to assume the name of Christians, and left them considered as nations, as destitute of the spirit and blessings of christianity as it found them; yet I cannot doubt, that wherever the New Testament, and the sufferings of Messiah, were known, some individuals at least experienced a real and saving change. And we are warranted to hope for still greater things; for a time when the gross darkness, which as yet covers a great part of the world, shall be dispelled; and the Redeemer's kingdom, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as a stone cut out without hands, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth, Dan. ii. 35. But this pleasing subject will come more directly under our consideration hereafter.

V. The call in my text may be taken in a general sense, like that of the apostle, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. Natural light requires eyes to perceive it. It would be absurd to point out the beauties of an extensive prospect to a blind man. To him the face of nature presents only a universal blank. But the light of the gospel not only discovers the most important objects to those who can see, but has a marvellous efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. It is the appointed instrument of divine power for this purpose. In vain would be the labour and expectation of the husbandman, if God did not afford the rain, and the snow, to water the earth, and the enlivening influences of the sun, to draw forth the tender blade, and to ripen the corn. Equally unsuccessful would the preaching of the gospel prove to sinful men, though in itself it be eminently the truth and wisdom of God, exactly suited to their state, and of the highest importance to their welfare, if he had not promised that his word, where simply and faithfully delivered in dependence upon his blessing, shall not be spoken in vain, but shall certainly accomplish the end for which he has sent it, Is. lv. 10, 11. This promise, together with the experience of its truth in our own case, and our knowledge of its uniform effects in every age and country where the doctrine of the cross has been preached, encourages ministers to persevere in publishing the glad tidings, in defiance of all the opposition and disappointments we meet with. We lament, but cannot wonder, that the gospel is so generally neglected. As a dispensation of grace, it offends the pride of man, as a dispensation of holiness, it contradicts his desires and passions. His spirit is degraded, his heart is pre-engaged, he loves the present world, and has no more taste or inclination for a life of communion with God here, and such a heaven as the scriptures propose hereafter, than the beasts of the field. But the Lord has said, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Is. xliii. 13. When he is pleased to clothe the word preached with the influences of his Holy Spirit, and to apply it to the conscience, it is quick, powerful, penetrating, and irresistible as lightning; it conveys a voice, which the deaf, yea, the dead, must hear: it forces a light upon the mind which cannot be evaded. Then things are seen as they are. The nature and desert of sin is apprehended, and then the gospel is found to be the only balm for a distressed and wounded conscience. Therefore, having the Lord's command and promise, we are not to be discouraged by the carelessness or obstinacy of those who know not what they do. We are aware of the difficulty, yea, the impossibility of succeeding in our endeavour to save the souls of our hearers, if we had only to depend upon our own arguments or earnestness. We are not to reason, but to obey. Our business is to deliver our message, and in our happier moments to water it with our prayers and tears. When we have done this we can do no more. The event must be left with him in whose name we speak. We must not suppress nor disguise what we are commanded to declare; nor wilfully make any additions of our own, to accommodate it to the taste or prejudice of our hearers, 2 Cor. iv. 2. Let those preach smooth things who will venture to answer at the great tribunal, for the souls that have miscarried under their ministry; we dare not. Let those be ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom. i. 16.), who feel no obligations to him for his dying love; we cannot, and by the grace of God, we will not; we will glory in it. God forbid that we should glory in any thing else! (Gal. vi. 14.) Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to preach and prophesy to dry bones, and he who sends us can cause the dry bones to live. "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Ezek. xxxvii. 4. The word of his salvation is sent to you. The Lord is risen indeed! Arise, shine, for your light is come! In his name we proclaim pardon and peace to all who will seek him. But seek him to-day, while it is called to-day; to morrow is not yours. Seek

him now, while he may be found. Harden not your hearts. Tremble, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should finally come short of it, Heb. iv. 1.

SERMON VIII.

THE SUN RISING UPON A DARK WORLD.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. ISAIAH, ix. 2.

CONTRASTS are suited to illustrate and strengthen the impression of each other. The happiness of those, who, by faith in Messiah, are brought into a state of peace, liberty, and comfort, is greatly enhanced and heightened by the consideration of that previous state of misery in which they once lived, and of the greater misery to which they were justly exposed. They are not only made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. i. 12, 13), but they have been delivered from the powers of darkness. Thus, while they have communion with God as a father, they contemplate their privilege with a greater pleasure, than they probably could do if they had never known a difference. They remember a time when they were afar off, without hope, and without God in the world; and they remember how carelessly they then trifled upon the brink of destruction. In this deplorable and dangerous situation they were found of the Lord, when they sought him not, Isa. lxv. 1. He convinced, humbled, and pardoned them, and brought them near to himself, into a state of adoption and communion by the blood of Jesus. The admiration, gratitude, and love, which they feel for this undeserved grace, gives them a more lively sense of the blessings they enjoy. Yea, the thought of what they have been redeemed from (of which they will then have a much clearer perception than at present) will add to their joys in heaven, and inspire such a song of praise as will be peculiar to themselves, and in which the holy angels, who never felt the stings of guilt, nor tasted the sweetness of pardoning mercy, will not be able to join them. They are accordingly represented, in the prophetical vision, as standing nearest to the throne, and uniting in the noblest strains of praise to him who sitteth upon it (Rev. v. 9—21), while the surrounding angels can only take part in the chorus, and admire and adore, when they behold the brightest displays of the glory of the wonder-working God, manifested in his love to worthless, helpless sinners.

These opposite ideas are joined in my text. The people who are spoken of as rejoicing in a great light, were, till this light arose and shone upon them, in darkness; walking, sitting, living in darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death. That this passage refers to Messiah, we have a direct proof. The evangelist refers it expressly to him, and points out the time and manner of its literal accomplishment, Matth. iv. 15, 16. I shall first consider the literal sense and completion of the prophecy, and then shew how fitly it applies to the state of mankind at large, and to the happy effects of the gospel of salvation; which, by the blessing of God, has been the instrument of bringing multitudes of many nations, peoples, and languages, out of a state of gross darkness, into marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

I. Hebrew words (like many in our own language) have often more than one signification. But only one sense can be expressed in a version. And therefore interpreters and translators frequently differ. Which of the different words, used to express the meaning of the same original term, is most happily chosen, may be sometimes decided by the context. The two words, in the first verse of this chapter, rendered *lightly afflicted* and *grievously afflicted*, signify likewise, the one to think lightly of, to account vile; and the other, to honour, to render honourable, and glorious. Both these words occur in one verse, and are used in these senses, in the Lord's message to Eli, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. Had the same words been thus rendered in the passage before us, the sense of both verses would, I think, have been more plain, connected, and consistent to the following purport, agreeable to the translation given by Vitringa, and the present bishop of London. "Nevertheless there shall not be dimness [or darkness] as in the time of her vexation or distress. He formerly debased [made light or vile] the land of Zebulon and Naphtali; but in the latter time he hath made it glorious, even [the land] by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. [For] the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light," &c.—Such was the afflicted and low state of Galilee previous to the coming of Messiah; such was the exaltation and honour it derived from his appearance.

1. The land allotted to the tribes of Issachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali, was chiefly included in the province, which, upon a subsequent division of the country, obtained the name of Galilee. The northern part of it, the inheritance of Naphtali, was the boundary or frontier towards Syria, and had been frequently vexed and afflicted, when the sins of Israel brought the armies of their enemies upon them, as frontier countries usually suffer most in times of invasion and war. Particularly this part of the land, called Galilee of the Gentiles, was the first, and most immedi

ately exposed to the ravages of Tiglath-Pileser and Sennacherib. And as the people there were likewise more mixed with foreigners, and at the greatest distance from the capital, Jerusalem, on these accounts Galilee was lightly esteemed by the Jews themselves. They thought that no prophet could arise in Galilee, John vii. 52. It even prejudiced Nathaniel against the first report he received of Jesus as Messiah, that he lived, and was generally supposed (by those who were content to be governed by popular rumour, without enquiring attentively for themselves) to have been born in Galilee. He asked with an appearance of surprise, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John i. 46. They were accounted a rude, unpolished, provincial people. And therefore, when Peter would have denied any acquaintance with his Lord, he was discovered to be a Galilean (Mark xiv. 70), by his dialect and manner of speech.

2. This despised and least valued part of the land of Israel was the principal scene of Messiah's life and ministry, insomuch that, as I have observed, he was supposed to have been born there, a mistake which his enemies industriously supported and made the most of; for those who could persuade themselves that it was so in fact, would think themselves justified in rejecting his claim, it being one undeniable mark of Messiah, given by the prophet Micah, that he was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah, Micah v. 2. He was, however, brought up at Nazareth, and lived for a time in Capernaum, towns in Galilee, but both of so little repute, that, had they not been connected with his history, it is not probable that their names would have been transmitted to posterity.

3. But by his residence there, Galilee was honoured and ennobled. He himself declared, that on this account, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (though probably none of them were more than inconsiderable fishing-towns) were exalted even to heaven, Matth. xi. 21—23. Those were highly privileged places which our Lord condescended to visit in person; so likewise are those places where he is pleased to send his gospel. I have observed formerly, and I make no apology for repeating a truth so very important and so little attended to, that the glorious gospel of the blessed God, when faithfully preached, and thankfully received and improved, renders an obscure village more honourable, and of more real consequence, than the metropolis of a great empire, where this light shineth not. For what are the dark places of the earth, however celebrated for numbers and opulence, for the monuments of ambition and arts, but habitations of cruelty, infatuation, and misery!

4. Though Galilee was favoured with the scriptures, and with synagogue-worship, and the inhabitants were a people who professed to know the God of Israel, it was a land of darkness at the time of Messiah's appearance. Though they were not idolaters, ignorance prevailed among them. The law and the prophets were read in their synagogues, but we may believe to little good purpose, while they were under the direction of perverse teachers, who substituted the traditions of men for the commands of God. The single circumstance of keeping herds of swine, as the Gadarenes did, seems a proof that the law of Moses was but little regarded by them. They, as well as the people of Judea, were under the guidance of the Scribes and Pharisees in their religious concerns, who were, if I may use a modern phrase, the clergy of that time; and these, we are assured by him who knew their hearts, were generally corrupted, blind leaders of the blind. Yet they were held in ignorant admiration, and implicitly submitted to. From the character of the public ministers of religion, we may, without great danger of mistake, infer the character of the people who are pleased and satisfied with their ministrations. As the disciple cannot, ordinarily, be expected to be superior to his master (Luke vi. 40), the religion of the scribes may be taken as a standard of that of the Galileans, who were instructed by them: yet these were the people among whom Messiah chiefly conversed; so that his enemies styled him a Galilean and a Nazarene, as a mark of reproach and contempt. Many of his apostles, perhaps the most of them, were Galileans likewise. He seeth not as man seeth, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The most of his immediate followers while upon earth were such as men despised, on account of their situation, rank, or callings; publicans and sinners, fishermen and Galileans. This was, among other reasons, for the encouragement of the poor, the destitute, the despised, the miserable, and the guilty, in succeeding ages, who should desire to put their trust in his name and to implore his mercy. To those who received him he was the light, the true light; he relieved them from the ignorance, wickedness, and distress in which he found them. They, on their parts, bore testimony to him. They saw and acknowledged his glory. They felt his power, and devoted themselves to his service. Thus much for the literal sense.

II. But this prophecy is not to be restrained to the first and more immediate season of its accomplishment. The Lord speaks thus of Messiah in another place: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth," Isaiah, xlix. 6. And there are many declarations of a like import. He is still the light of the world (John viii. 12), though no longer visible and conversant with men. By the in-

fluence and power of his Spirit, he is still present wherever his gospel is known. This his word of grace and truth he sends where he pleases, and with a discrimination not unlike that which he observed when he was upon earth. The gospel is preached to the poor. Courts and palaces are seldom favoured with it. While he passes by many great cities, many habitations of the wise and wealthy, he is known in villages and cottages. His condescension and favour to those who are unnoticed by the world, cannot be too highly extolled. That the others are excluded from the same benefits is more properly to be ascribed to their obstinacy than to his will. They exclude themselves. He stands at the door and knocks, Rev. iii. 20. His word is within their reach; his ministers are within their call. They might easily enjoy every mean and help which the gospel provides for sinners if they pleased, but they do not please. They are either engaged in a round of sensual pleasure, or engrossed by studies and pursuits which possess their hearts and fill up their thoughts and time, so that they have neither leisure nor inclination to attend to the things which pertain to their peace. Instead of inviting his gospel to them, they too frequently employ their power and influence to discountenance, and, if possible, to suppress it. They have their choice. The great and the gay will not receive his message; it is therefore sent to the poor and to the wretched, and they will hear it. Yet as he visited Jerusalem in person, and taught there, so London likewise is favoured with the light of his gospel. But alas! how few believe the report! They who do, experience the change described in my text. Their darkness is changed into marvellous light.

Mankind, till enlightened by the word and Spirit of grace, are truly in a state of darkness. Thick darkness is a vail which conceals from us, not only distant, but the nearest objects. A man in the dark cannot perceive either friend or enemy; he may be in great danger, yet think himself in safety; or, if he thinks himself in danger, be unable to take any step for his preservation, from a want of light. Thus, though God be our maker and preserver, though in him we live, move, and have our being, though we are surrounded with his presence, and proofs of his wisdom and goodness are before us wherever we turn our eyes, yet we live without him in the world. Equally ignorant are we of ourselves, of the proper happiness of our nature, or how it is to be attained. We know neither the cause, nor the cure, nor the consequences of our proneness to cleave to the dust, and of placing our affection on inadequate and unsatisfying objects.

And if we suppose a person awakened to a conviction of the evil of sin, and to understand that nothing less than the favour of God can make a rational and immortal creature happy, still, without the gospel, he would be in darkness and the shadow of death. His case may be compared to that of a person shipwrecked upon some desert, inhospitable coast, suffering great horrors and anxiety, from his exposedness to perish, by hunger, by enemies, or wild beasts—who, if he saw, at no very great distance, an island, and was, by some means, informed and assured, that that island was the seat of safety, plenty, and pleasure; and that, if he was once there, his dangers would all cease, and his utmost wishes be satisfied; still, if there were neither bridge, nor boat, nor any means by which he might arrive thither, to know that happiness was so near him, yet inaccessible to him, would but aggravate his misery, and make his despair more emphatically pungent. Miserable indeed must we be, if we clearly perceived that only he, whose creatures we are, can make us happy; and that, as sinners, we have forfeited his favour, and are utterly incapable of regaining it, if we were left under these views, without any hope of relief. Such must have been our situation sooner or later, if God, who is rich in mercy, had not himself provided the means of reconciliation. For though a hope of pardon is easily taken up by those who are ignorant of the holiness of God, and the malignity of sin, yet nothing but a declaration from himself, that there is forgiveness with him, can give peace to a truly awakened conscience. But Jesus dispels this darkness, and brings life and immortality to light by the gospel. For,

1. The office and agency of the Holy Spirit, so absolutely necessary to make us duly sensible, either of our danger, or of the possibility of escaping it, is entirely the effect of his mediation. The soul of man, originally formed to be the temple of the living God, when defiled by sin, was justly forsaken by its great inhabitant; and, since the fall, answers the prophetical description given of Babylon: "It is become the habitation of devils, tho hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird," Rev. xviii. 2. If we ask, as with good reason we may, How can the wise and holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and with whom evil cannot dwell, return to his sanctuary, thus polluted and profaned? an answer is afforded in that gracious promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you: and I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and," in order to this, "I will put my Spirit within you," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. But the source of this mercy is his sovereign love and purpose, to give the seed of the woman, his only Son, to be the mediator of sinners. By his atonement, to be manifested in due time, but which had a

virtual Influence from the beginning, the Holy Spirit returned to dwell with men.

2. His obedience unto death, when revealed by the Holy Spirit to the enlightened conscience, affords a clear and satisfactory discovery of reconciliation with God: it shews, that, on his part, every hindrance to the free exercise of mercy is thereby removed, the honour of his law vindicated, and the demands of his justice answered. On our parts, by opening a door of hope, it removes that enmity and obduracy of heart, which are nourished by consciousness of guilt, and a secret foreboding of deserved punishment. But when the dignity of the Redeemer's person, the causes, nature, and design of his sufferings are understood, emotions of admiration, love, and gratitude, till then unknown, are felt, and obstinate sinners are made a willing people in this day of divine power.

3. The doctrine of the cross pours a light upon every subject and circumstance in which we are concerned. It enlarges the mind, and forms the judgment and taste, agreeable to the standard of truth, and the real nature of things. It rectifies those prejudices and prepossessions which dispose us to mistake good for evil, and evil for good (Isa. v. 20), to pursue trifles with earnestness, and to trifle with things of the greatest importance. In Jesus Christ crucified, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are at once both hidden and exhibited. This object the holy angels, whose knowledge of the wonders in creation, without doubt, greatly surpasses our conceptions, incessantly contemplate with delight, as affording the brightest displays of the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. It is especially the fountain of wisdom to sinners. They look unto him, and are enlightened. The slight and partial thoughts they once entertained of the great God, the mistaken judgment they formed of themselves, of their state and their conduct, are corrected by their knowledge of the cross: from thence they derive a solid hope, a humble spirit, just views of their duty and obligations, and motives and prospects which animate them in a course of cheerful, persevering obedience to the will of God.

4. In this way, God, as revealed in Christ, is apprehended and chosen, as the chief and proper good of the soul. Thus the poor are enriched with the pearl of great price, and the weary obtain rest. The mind, no longer burdened with anxiety, nor mortified with a succession of disappointments, which attended the vain pursuit of happiness in earthly things, possesses present peace, and rejoices in the expectation of future glory. It is released from the slavery of hewing out broken cisterns, and introduced to the fountain of living waters. Or, to close with the beautiful image in my text, The people who once walked in darkness, and the region of the shadow of death, are translated into the kingdom of life and salvation, Col. i. 13.

How greatly are they to be pitied who reject the light of the gospel! It is true, they cannot see it; but it is equally true, they will not. But may I not hope that this is a day of divine power, in which some of you shall be made a willing people? Do not reason against your own life, but repent, and believe the gospel. The light shines around you, whether you perceive it or not; and it has an efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. Where the gospel is preached, the Lord is present. If you call upon him, he will hear, and you shall receive your sight. If the grace and the glory of the Saviour have hitherto made no impression upon your heart, you are spiritually blind. Could you be sensible of your disorder, the remedy is at hand. If now, at last, you are willing to seek him, he will be found of you. But if you deliberately prefer darkness, your state is awfully dangerous; and if you persist in your obstinacy, your ruin is unavoidable. God is gracious and long-suffering, but he will not be mocked, Gal. vi. 7. Humble yourselves at once, and implore his mercy, or else prepare to meet him in judgment. But be assured he will not meet you as a man. You must either bend or break. The Lord forbid that he should say to any of you, in the great day of his appearance, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"

SERMON IX.

CHARACTERS AND NAMES OF MESSIAH.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. ISAIAH, ix. 6.

SUCH was the triumphant exultation of the Old Testament church! Their noblest hopes were founded upon the promise of Messiah; their sublimest songs were derived from the prospect of his advent. By faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, they considered the gracious declarations of the faithful unchangeable God as already accomplished though the actual performance respected a period, as yet future and distant; especially as believers, under that dispensation, already felt the influence of the redemption which Messiah was to consummate in the fulness of time. It was the knowledge of his engagement on the behalf of sinners that gave life and significancy to all the institutions of the ceremonial law, which otherwise, though of divine appointment, would have been a heavy

and burdensome yoke, Acts xv. 10. Isaiah, therefore, prepares this joyful song for the true servants of God, who lived in his time; and though it was a day of trial and rebuke, they were provided with a sufficient compensation for all their sufferings, in being warranted to say, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder," &c.

This ancient song is still new. It has been, and will be taken up from age to age, by the New Testament church, with superior advantage. I trust many of you understand it well, and rejoice in it daily. Men naturally look for something wherein to rejoice and glory. Little reason have the wise to glory in their supposed wisdom (Jer. ix. 23.), or the strong in their fading strength, or the rich in their transitory wealth; but this is a just and unfailing ground of glory to true christians, that "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," &c.

When a sinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to understand the character and offices of Messiah, his ability and willingness to save those who are ready to perish, and the happiness of all who are brought into subjection to his gracious government, and when he begins to feel the cheering effects of faith in his name, then this song becomes his own, and exactly suits the emotions and gratitude of his heart. But many persons will despise and pity him as a weak enthusiast. And yet, perhaps, they do not think so unfavourably of the rapture of Archimedes, of whom it is related, that having suddenly discovered the solution of a difficult problem while he was bathing, he was so transported with joy, that he forgot his situation, sprung instantly from the bath, and ran through the city, crying, "I have found it, I have found it!" He is not usually charged with madness on this account, though the expression of his joy was certainly over-proportioned to the cause. The truth is, the world will allow of a vehemence approaching to ecstacy, on almost any occasion, but on that alone, which, above all others, will justify it. A person who would be thought destitute of taste, if he was unaffected by the music to which this passage is set, would, at the same time, hazard his reputation for good sense, with some judges, if he owned himself affected by the plain meaning of the words. Incompetent judges surely! who are pleased to approve of warmth and emotion of spirit, provided the object be trivial, and only condemn it in concerns of the greatest importance! But I trust the character of my auditory is very different, and that the most of you desire to enter into the spirit of this passage, and to have a more lively sense of your own interests in it. May the Lord grant your desire, and accompany our meditations upon it with his power and blessing!

Every clause in this passage might furnish subject for a long discourse; but my plan will only permit me briefly to touch upon the several particulars, which will lead to a recapitulation or summary of what has been already considered more largely concerning the person, offices, and glory of Messiah. We have,

I. His incarnation.—"Unto us a child is born;" in our nature, born of a woman: "Unto us a son is given;" not merely a man-child, but, emphatically, a son, the Son of God. This was the most precious gift, the highest proof and testimony of divine love. The distinction and union of these widely distant natures, which constitute the person of Christ, the God-man, the Mediator, is, in the judgment and language of the apostle, the great mystery of godliness (1 Tim. iii. 16), the pillar and ground of truth. I shall not repeat what I have already offered on this point in the fifth sermon. It is the central truth of revelation, which, like the sun, diffuses a light upon the whole system, no part of which can be rightly understood without it Thus the Lord of all humbled himself, to appear in the form of a servant for the sake of sinners.

II. His exaltation.—"The government shall be upon his shoulder." In our nature he suffered, and in the same nature he reigns. When he had overcome the sharpness, the sting of death, he took possession of the kingdom of glory as his own, and opened it to all who believe in him. Now we can say, He who governs in heaven and on earth, and whom all things obey, is the child who was born, the son who was given for us. Some subsequent passages will lead us hereafter to contemplate more directly the glory of the Redeemer's administration in the kingdoms of providence and grace. At present, therefore, I shall only observe, that the exaltation of the Redeemer infers the dignity and security of the people who are united to him by faith. They have, in one respect, an appropriate honour, in which the angels cannot share. Their best friend, related to them in the same nature, is seated upon the throne of glory. Since he is for them, who can be against them? What may they not expect, when he, who has so loved them as to redeem them with his own blood, has all power committed unto him, both in heaven and on earth! For,

III. The names and characters here ascribed to him, are not only expressive of what he is in himself, but of what he has engaged to be to them.

1. His name shall be called Wonderful.—In another place the word is rendered Secret, Judges xiii. 18. It is true of him in both senses. He is Wonderful in his person, obedience, and sufferings; in his grace, government, and glory. So far as we understand his name, the revelation by which, as by a

name, he is made known, we may, we must, believe, admire, and adore. But how limited and defective is our knowledge! His name is Secret. Who can by searching find him out? Job xi. 7. His greatness is incomprehensible, his wisdom untraceable, his fullness inexhaustible, his power infinite. No one knoweth the Son but the Father. But they have a true, though not an adequate knowledge of him, who trust, love, and serve him; and in their view he is Wonderful! The apostle expresses the sentiment of their hearts, when he says, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. Another of his names is Counsellor.—The great councils of redemption, in which every concern respecting the glory of God and the salvation of sinners was adjusted, were established with him, and in him, before the foundation of the world. And he is our Counsellor or Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cause, and manages all our affairs in perfect righteousness, and with infallible success; so that no suit can possibly miscarry which he is pleased to undertake. To him likewise we must apply (and we shall not apply in vain) for wisdom and direction, in all that belongs to our duty, and the honour of our profession in the present life. In all our difficulties, dangers, and cares, we must look to him for guidance, and support. This is to be wise unto salvation. His secret is with them that consult him; so that though the world may deem them weak and ignorant as babes (and he teaches them to think thus of themselves), they have a cheering and practical knowledge of many important subjects, which are entirely hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes.

3. He is the Mighty God.—Though in the office of mediator, he acts in the character of a servant, his perfections and attributes are truly divine. Only the mighty God could make a provision capable of answering the demands of the holy law, which we had transgressed. Only the mighty God could be a suitable Shepherd to lead millions of weak helpless creatures to glory, through the many difficulties, dangers, and enemies, they are exposed to in their passage. Add to this, the honour, dependence, and obedience, which this great Shepherd claims from his sheep, are absolute and supreme; and they would be guilty of idolatry, if they did not know that he is the mighty God. Though real christians, who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit, may, and do differ in their views and explanations of some revealed truths, I conceive they must be all agreed in this point. It is not only necessary to be known as the only solid foundation of a sinner's hope, but it immediately respects the object of divine worship. For if the Redeemer is not possessed of the incommunicable perfections of Deity, the New Testament, in its most obvious and literal signification, would be chargeable, not only with countenancing, but with expressly teaching and enjoining idolatry.

4. Farther, he shall be called the Everlasting Father.—He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb. ii. 11), having condescended to assume their human nature. But they are also his children. They are born into his family by the efficacy of his own word and Spirit. From him they derive their spiritual life, being united to him by faith, and receiving from first to last out of his fulness. And he is an everlasting Father. Our fathers according to the flesh are subject to death. But his relation to them subsists unchangeably and therefore they cannot be destitute: and he is thus equally to them all. They live upon the earth, and are removed from it, in a long succession of ages; but he is the Father of the everlasting age, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. All generations shall call him blessed. To him, therefore, the apostle teaches us to apply that sublime passage of the Psalmist: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Psal. cii. 25—27. Heb. i, 10—12.

5. Lastly, he shall be called the Prince of Peace,—whose sovereign prerogative it is, to speak peace to his people (Psal. lxxxv. 8); and there is no peace, deserving the name, but that which he bestows. The scripture expressly declares, that there is no peace to the wicked, Is. lvii. 21. By whatever name we call that thoughtless security and insensibility, in which mankind generally live, while ignorant of God and of themselves, we cannot allow it to be peace. It is the effect of blindness and hardness of heart; it will neither bear reflection nor examination. Can they be said to possess peace, however fatally regardless they may be of futurity, who are at present under the dominion of restless, insatiable, and inconsistent passions and appetites? But the kingdom of Messiah is a kingdom of peace, and in him, his happy subjects enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7), such as the world can neither give nor take away. He has made peace by the blood of his cross (Col. i. 20), for all that come unto God by him. Until they are in trouble and distress, until they feel the bitterness and fear the consequences of their sins, and see the impossibility of helping themselves, they will not apply to him; but whenever they do seek him, thus weary and heavy-laden, he hears their prayer. Their minds, for a season, are like the sea in a storm, they are distressed with guilt, fears, and temptations; but when

he reveals his mighty name and boundless grace to their hearts, and says, Peace be still (Mark iv. 39), then there is a great calm. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives them peace likewise in a changing troublesome world, by inviting and enabling them to cast all their cares upon him, and to trust all their concerns in his hands, upon the assurance his word gives them, that he careth for them, and will manage and over-rule every thing for their good. In proportion as their faith realizes his promises, they feel a composure and satisfaction. Knowing that the hairs of their head are numbered, that their afflictions, no less than their comforts, are tokens of his love, that he will give them strength according to their day, that he will be their guide and their guard even unto death; they are not greatly moved by any events, or disturbed by apprehensions, because their hearts are fixed (Psal. cxii. 7), trusting in the Lord. Farther, he teaches them (what can only be learnt of him) how to seek and maintain peace among men. His love subdues the power of self, and forms them to a spirit of philanthropy and benevolence, which has often such an effect, that they who dislike them for their attachment to him and to his precepts, and would willingly speak evil of them, are ashamed, and put to silence, by their perseverance in well-doing. Thus their peace increases as a river, which runs with a deeper and a broader stream as it approaches the ocean. For their peace is then strongest and most unshaken, when they draw near to death, and are upon the point of resigning their souls into his hands. This is the time, when, if not before, the false peace of the worldling, will give way to terror and dismay. But "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," Psal. xxxvii. 37. It must be allowed, that many of his people, through the power of temptation and remaining unbelief, have, at some seasons, uncomfortable fears concerning a dying hour; but when the time of their dismission actually arrives, we seldom see them afraid of the summons. There is a strength necessary to support the soul at the approach of death, which is usually with-held till the time of need. But then it is vouchsafed. They who have frequently access to the beds of dying believers, can bear testimony, as eye-witnesses, to the faithfulness of their Lord. How often have we seen them triumphing in the prospect of immortality! as happy, in defiance of pain and sickness, as we can well conceive it possible to be while in the body, and as sure of heaven, as if they were already before the throne.

Such is the character of Messiah! This is the God whom we adore; our almighty, unchangeable Friend! His greatness and goodness, his glory and his grace, when once known, fix the heart, no more to rove, and fill it with admiration, gratitude, and desire. From hence spring a cheerful, unreserved obedience to his commands, and a deliberate voluntary submission to his holy will. For his people do not serve him or yield to him by constraint; at least it is only the pleasing constraint of love, which makes their duty their delight, and their burden and grief is that they can serve him no better.

May we be all thus minded! I dare not hope it is so with us all at present. But this is the day of his grace. For this cause he came into the world, that he might draw many hearts to himself, John xii. 32. And for this purpose he favours us with his gospel, by which he still says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," Isaiah, xlv. 22. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28. To be found among his faithful followers, in the great day when he shall come to judge the world, is the one thing which, above all others, deserves our solicitude.

Hear then his voice to-day. Perhaps you are apprised of the necessity of a change of heart and life, at some future period, in order to die safely. Such a change is equally necessary if you wish to live comfortably. While you are unfit to die, you can have no true enjoyment of life. It were easy to prove at large that procrastination is highly dangerous. Admitting that, according to your present feelings, you really think yourself determined to seek the Lord at some future time, do you consider how many uncertainties you presume upon? Are you sure that you shall not be suddenly cut off by an unexpected and unthought-of stroke, or visited by a fever which may quickly bring you into a state of delirium or stupefaction, and render your projected repentance impracticable? Yea, it will in any circumstances be impracticable, unless God is pleased to influence your mind by his good Spirit. If you grieve this Spirit now, by resisting his operations, what reason have you to expect that he will then return? Do we not see many instances of what the poet, with great propriety, calls, "A slow sudden death?" How many people, while pining away under the power of some incurable disease, amuse themselves with the hope of recovery to the last gasp; and though their acquaintance read death in their countenance for weeks or months, in defiance of such repeated and long-continued warnings, they die as suddenly, with respect to their own apprehensions, as if killed by lightning. Tremble, lest such be your last end, if you trifle with God, who now calls you by his gospel, to seek him to-day, while it is called to-day.

But I would lead you to consider your delay not only as dangerous but as unreasonable. Why are you afraid of being happy too soon? What strange and hard thoughts have you of God, if you suppose you can find more pleasure in living according to your own

wills than in obedience to his commands! Can the world give you such peace and satisfaction as I have attempted to describe? Do you think a real persuasion that God is your friend, and that heaven will be your home, will spoil the relish of your earthly enjoyments, or make your lives uncomfortable? What hard thing does the Lord require of you, that you are so unwilling to comply? If we set aside, for a moment, the consideration of a future state and a final judgment, yet even in a temporal view you would be great gainers, if your spirit and your conduct were regulated by the gospel. What heart-breaking troubles, what losses, contests, pains of body, and remorse of conscience, would some of you have avoided, if you had believed and obeyed the word of God! What distresses may your headstrong passions soon plunge you into, if you presume to go on in your sins! For that the way of transgressors is hard, is not only declared in scripture, but proved by the history and observation of every day. Forsake the foolish, therefore, and live. And while the door of mercy is still open before you, pray to him who is able to bless you indeed, by delivering you from the guilt and from the power of your iniquities; lest, if being often reproved (Prov. xxix. 1), and still hardening your hearts, you should suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

SERMON X.

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND SONG.

There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel of the Lord said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men. LUKE, ii. 8—14.

THE gratification of the great, the wealthy, and the gay was chiefly consulted in the late exhibitions in Westminster-Abbey. But notwithstanding the expense of the preparations, and the splendid appearance of the auditory, I may take it for granted that the shepherds who were honoured with the first information of the birth of Messiah, enjoyed, at free cost, a much more sublime and delightful entertainment. How poor and trivial is the most studied magnificence and brilliancy of an earthly court compared with that effulgence of glory which surrounded the shepherds! The performers of this Oratorio, if I may be allowed the expression, were a multitude of the heavenly host. And though I do not suppose that the angel delivered his message in the cadence which we call recitative, I have no doubt but the chorus was a song, sweetly melodious as from blest voices; a song which the redeemed and the angels of the Lord are still singing before the throne; a new song (Rev. v. 9), a song which will be always new We are made acquainted with the subject, yea, with the very words of this song. May our hearts be suitably affected by the consideration of them to-day! The melody and harmony of heaven are far above our conceptions. The music of that happy land has no dependence upon the vibrations of the air, or the admirable structure of the human ear. But we have reason to believe there is, in the world of light and love, something analogous to what we call music, though different in kind, and vastly superior in effect to any strains that can be produced by the most exquisite voices or instruments upon earth; as we readily judge the glory of an angel to be unspeakably more excellent, both in kind and in degree, than any thing that is deemed glorious among mortals.

To consider this passage at large would require many discourses. I shall confine myself at present to a few brief reflections on the circumstances of this heavenly vision, the message of the angel, and the concluding chorus or song.

I. The circumstances.

1. Lo, an angel came upon them, &c.—Suddenly, when they had no expectation of such a visit, without any thing that might previously engage their attention, all at once, like a flash of lightning, a glory shone around them, and an angel appeared. We do not wonder that they were impressed with fear. We live near, perhaps in the midst of, an invisible world, full of great and wonderful realities, which yet, by too many persons, are considered and treated as nonentities, because they are not perceived by our bodily senses. But the scripture assures us of the fact; and to reject this testimony, because it is not confirmed by our senses, is no less irrational and unphilosophical than impious. A man born blind can have no more conception of light and colours than we have of what passes in the world of spirits. And a nation of blind men, if there were such a nation, would probably treat a seeing person as a visionary madman, if he spoke to them of what he saw. But he would be sure of his own perceptions, though he could not satisfy the inquiries and cavils of the blind. Our senses are accommodated to our present state; but there may

be a multitude of objects, as real in themselves, and as near to us, as any that we behold with our eyes, of which we, for want of suitable faculties, can have no idea. To deny this, and to make our senses the criteria of the existence of things which are not within their reach, is exactly such an absurdity as a blind man would be guilty of, who should deny the possibility of a rainbow, because he never heard it or felt it. However, faith is the evidence of things not seen. And they who believe the word of God cannot doubt of the existence of an invisible state and invisible agents. The barrier between the inhabitants of that state and us is too strong to be passed, for the will of the great Creator seems to be the barrier. Otherwise it is probable they could easily surprise us, since, upon special occasions, they have been permitted to discover themselves. We have a natural dread of such visitants, even though they should appear to us, as they did to the shepherds, as messengers of peace and mercy from God. Yet we must shortly mingle with them. Death will introduce us into the world of spirits, and what we shall then meet with, what beings will be ready to accost us upon our first entrance into that unknown, unchangeable state, who can say? It deserves our serious thought. We are now encompassed by the objects of sense, but we must be soon separated from them all. We live in a crowd, but we must die alone. Happy are they, who, like Stephen, shall be able to commend their departing spirits into the hands of Jesus! He is Lord of all worlds, and has the keys of hades, of the invisible state.

2. The angel spoke—The gospel was preached by an angel to Zacharias, to the virgin mother of Messiah, now to the shepherds; and, perhaps, to none but these. The angel, who appeared to Cornelius, said nothing to him of Jesus, but only directed him to send for Peter, Acts x. 4, 5. The glorious gospel of the blessed God, with respect to its dignity, depth, and importance, may seem a fitter theme for the tongue of an angel than of a man; but, angels never sinned, and though they might proclaim its excellency, they could not, from experience, speak of its efficacy. In this respect sinful worms are better qualified to preach to others, concerning him by whom they have themselves been healed and saved. Their weakness, likewise, is better suited to shew that the influence and success of the gospel is wholly owing to the power of God. It has therefore pleased God to put this treasure into earthen vessels, and to commit the ministry of his word, not to angels, but to men. They whom he is pleased to employ in this office, however weak and unworthy in themselves, derive an honour and importance from the message entrusted to them, and are so far worthy of the same attention, as if an angel from heaven spoke. They are sinful men, and have reason to think humbly of themselves: nor should they, as the servants of a suffering, crucified Master, either wonder or complain if they meet with unkindness from those whom they wish to serve; but they may magnify their office, (Rom. xi. 13.) and it is at the peril of their hearers to despise it. What the world accounts in us the foolishness of preaching, is made to those who simply receive it, the wisdom and power of God. To others, even angels would preach in vain. They who hear not Moses and the prophets, who submit not to the ordinary methods and means of grace which God has appointed, would not be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead

3. The angel was sent with the most interesting news that could be made known to mankind; not to Cæsar, or to Herod, or to the High Priest, but to obscure and lowly shepherds. The Lord seeth not as man seeth: the petty distinctions that obtain among men are not regarded by him. He is equally near to them that fear him in every situation of life, as the sun shines, as freely and fully, upon a cottage as upon a palace. These shepherds were doubtless, of the number of the happy few, who, in that time of degeneracy, were waiting and longing for the consolation of Israel. The heads of the Jewish people found their consolation in their rank and wealth, and in the respect paid them by the vulgar. These things usually add to the idea of self-importance, and feed those tempers which are most displeasing to the Lord, and which indispose the mind to the reception of the gospel, or to any due inquiry concerning it. And thus, in fact from age to age, it has generally been hidden from the wise and the great, and revealed unto babes. The magi, or wise men who lived in the east, where the knowledge of astronomy obtained, but where the scripture was not known, were guided to Messiah by the appearance of a new star or meteor. The shepherds, who were acquainted with the prophecies concerning Messiah, were informed of their accomplishment by an angel. Thus the Lord was pleased to suit the different manner of making known his will, to the previous situation of the persons.

II. The message of the angel, though concise, was comprehensive and full. It contained the Fact, "Unto you is born this day"—the Place, "In the city of David," that is, in Bethlehem, so called, because David likewise had been born there (Luke ii. 4.)—the Office of Messiah, "A Saviour"—his Name, Honour, and Character, "Christ," or the Anointed; "the Lord," the head and king of Israel, and of the church, the Lord of all. I do but recite these particulars now, as they will repeatedly offer to our consideration in the series of subjects before me. The description of the state in which they would find him, was such, as could only be reconciled to

his titles and honours, by that simple faith, which, without vain reasoning, acquiesces in the declarations of God. For how unlikely would it seem to a merely human judgment, that the Saviour of sinners, the promised Messiah, the Lord of all, should be a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. Yet thus it was. Though rich in himself, he became poor for our sakes, 2 Cor. viii. 9. On this account, as the scriptures had foretold, he was despised and rejected of men. Though he came to his own, as a Lord or Master to his own house; yet, coming in this manner, his own professed servants, who pretended that they were longing and waiting for him, slighted and opposed him; preferred a notorious malefactor to him, and put him to death as an impostor and blasphemer. But the shepherds reasoned not through unbelief, and therefore they were not staggered: they obeyed the message, they went, they saw, they believed.

The seeming repugnance between the greatness of Messiah's claims, and the state of humiliation in which he appeared when upon earth, was the great stumbling-block then, and continues to be so at this day. Because he stooped so low, and made himself of no reputation, too many still refuse to acknowledge his divine character. But they who are willing to be taught by the word and Spirit of God, see a beauty and propriety in his submitting to be born in a stable, and to live as a poor man, destitute of house or property. Hereby he poured contempt upon worldly pomp and vanity, sanctified the state of poverty to his followers, and set them an encouraging example to endure it with cheerfulness. They, like the shepherds and his first disciples, are delivered from their natural prejudices, and are enabled to behold his glory, through the vail of his outward humiliation, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. And his condescension in becoming poor for their sakes, that they through his poverty might be made rich, affects their hearts with admiration and gratitude.

But though too many, who are governed by the spirit and maxims of this world, are far from admiring his love, in assuming our nature under those circumstances, which, from his infancy to his death, exposed him to the contempt of his enemies, it is otherwise thought of in yonder world of light. For we read, that when the angel had declared to the shepherds the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host expressed their joy by a song, which is the next subject that offers to our consideration.

III. Their highest praise was excited by a view of the effects which this unexampled love would produce.

1. "Glory to God in the highest." In the highest heaven, in the highest degree, for this highest instance of his mercy. At the creation these morning-stars sung for joy, Job xxxviii. 7. But redemption was a greater work than they had yet seen, and a work by which his goodness, wisdom, and power, would be still more abundantly magnified. The glory of God, the exhibition of his adorable perfections, to the view of intelligent creatures, is the last and highest end of all his works. Nor would it be worthy of the infinite eternal God, in comparison with whose immensity, the aggregate of all created good is no more than a point compared with the universe, or a single ray of light compared with the sun, to propose any thing short of his own glory, as the ultimate, final cause of his designs. And in proportion as any finite intelligences are conformed to the will of their Creator, and impressed with a sense of his pre-eminence, their highest end and aim will be the same with his. If, therefore, we compare the glory of God and the good of his creatures together, we may refer to them what our Lord was pleased to declare of the two great commandments. The former is incomparably the first and greatest of his ends; the second, in its proper place and subordination, is like unto it, and inseparably connected with it, or rather derived from it. The former is, if I may so speak, the essential difference of the divine operations; the latter, so far as consistent with it, is the result of a glorious and efficacious property of his consummate excellence. In the redemption of fallen man, both are displayed to the highest advantage. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

The glory of his goodness:—this shines bright in the capacities and happiness he has communicated to angels; but it shines with greater brightness in the mercy afforded to mankind; whether we consider the objects, who are sinners, rebels, and enemies; or his purpose in their favour, not only to restore the life they had forfeited, but to bestow it more abundantly (John x. 10), with respect to title, security and honour; or lastly, and principally, the mean by which their deliverance from everlasting misery, and their possession of everlasting happiness, is procured; and which could only be procured by the humiliation and death of the Son of his love.

The glory of his wisdom, in adjusting the demands of his holiness, justice and truth, with the purposes of his mercy;—in providing such a method for the exercise of his mercy, as renders his displeasure against sin more conspicuous by pardoning, than by punishing it;—in abasing the sinner's pride, by the very considerations which inspire his hope and confidence; so that while he confesses himself unworthy of the very air that he breathes, he is encouraged and warranted to claim a participation in all the blessings of grace and glory:—and finally, in proposing motives, which, when rightly understood, are

always found sufficient to influence the heart, even though it has been habitually hardened in sin, long deaf to the voice of reason, conscience, and interest, and equally unaffected by the judgments or the mercies of God, till enlightened to perceive the excellency of the gospel.

The glory of his power, in making all the acts of free agents, through a long succession of ages, subservient to this great purpose, not excepting those who most laboured to obstruct it;—in changing the disposition of the sinner, however obstinate;—and in carrying on his work of grace, when once begun, in such feeble inconsistent creatures as men are, in defiance of all difficulties and opposition arising from within or without.

These are subjects which the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. i. 12), which fill the most exalted intelligences with admiration. The glory of God was manifested, was celebrated in the highest heavens, when Messiah was born of a woman.

2. The great design and effect of his appearance with regard to mankind, is peace. "On earth peace." Man, as a fallen creature, is in a state of war and rebellion against his Maker. He has renounced his allegiance and dependence, is become his own end. He is now against God, disobedient to his laws, and disaffected to his government. And his conscience, if not stupified and cauterized by frequent resistance of conviction, suggests that God is against him. He feels he is not happy here, he fears he shall be miserable hereafter. This apprehension strengthens his aversion from God. And, indeed, without an express assurance from the Lord himself, whom he has offended, that there is forgiveness with him, he would not only fear, but sink into despair, if he rightly understood the horrid enormity of a state of alienation from the blessed God. But infinite wisdom and mercy have provided, and propounded a method, by which the honour of the divine perfections and government are secured, and pardon and peace vouchsafed to rebels. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The knowledge of this mercy, when revealed to the sinner's heart, subdues his enmity, constrains him to throw down his arms, and to make an unreserved submission and surrender of himself; forms him to a temper of love and confidence, and disposes him to habitual and cheerful obedience. Now mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other (Psal. lxxxv. 10); and God is glorified in the highest, for peace proclaimed upon the earth.

The expression of "good will towards men," seems to rise upon the former. Not only peace, but acceptance and adoption in the Beloved. Sinners who believe in the Son of God, are not merely delivered from the condemnation they have deserved, but are united to their Saviour; considered as one with him, his children, the members of his body, and made partakers of his life, and his glory. God is their portion, and heaven is their home. The Lord's satisfaction in this, as the greatest of all his works, is expressed by the prophet in such astonishing terms of condescension, as surpass our utmost conceptions; and we can only say, Lord, what is man that thou art thus mindful of him! We believe, admire, and adore. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing," Zeph. iii. 17.

Assuredly this song of the heavenly host is not the language of our hearts by nature. We once sought our pleasure and happiness in a very different way. We were indifferent to the glory of God, and strangers to his peace. And some of us are still blind to the excellencies of the gospel, and deaf to its gracious invitations. But we must not expect to sing with the great company of the redeemed hereafter, before the throne of glory, unless we learn, and love their song while we are here, Rev. xiv. 3. They who attain to the inheritance of the saints in light, are first made meet for it in the present life, and in this way. They believe the testimony of the scripture respecting their own guilt, unworthiness, and helplessness; then they receive the record which God has given of his Son. They renounce all confidence in the flesh (Phil. iii. 3); they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and from his fulness they derive grace to worship God in the Spirit. A sense of their obligations to the Saviour, disposes them to praise him now as they can; and they rejoice in hope of seeing him ere long as he is, and that then they shall praise him as they ought. For heaven itself, as described in the word of God, could not be a state of happiness to us, unless we are like-minded with the apostle, to account all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON XI.

MESSIAH'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh into thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.—And I he shall speak peace unto the Heathen.—ZECH ix 9, 10.

THE narrowness and littleness of the mind of fallen man are sufficiently conspicuous in the idea he forms of magnificence and grandeur. The pageantry and parade of a Roman triumph, or of an eastern monarch, as describ-

ed in history, exhibit him to us in what he himself accounts his best estate. If you suppose him seated in an imperial carriage, arrayed in splendid apparel, wearing a crown or tiara ornamented with jewels, preceded and followed by a long train of guards and attendants, surrounded by the unmeaning acclamations of ignorant multitudes, you see the poor worm at the summit of his happiness. He has no conception of any thing greater than this. And the spectators are generally of the same mind. They admire, and they envy, his lot; and there is hardly a person in the crowds around him, but would be very glad to take his place, were it practicable. Yet this great little creature would surely be mortified, if, in the height of his self-complacence, he could consider, that he had the very same regard for a pre-eminence in finery, the same desire to be admired and envied, and felt the same kind of satisfaction in distinction above his fellows, when he was a child of ten years old. He is in effect a child still, only he has changed his play-things, and now acts upon a larger scale, but with the same trifling and contracted views.

How different was Messiah's entry into Jerusalem foretold in this prophecy, the accomplishment of which we read in the evangelists! And how differently was he affected by the objects around him! He poured contempt upon the phantom of human glory. This King of kings and Lord of lords was meek and lowly, riding upon an ass's colt, Luke xix. 35—38. And though a secret divine influence constrained the multitude to acknowledge his character, and, with some accommodation to the customs of the times, to strew their garments in the way, as they proclaimed the King who came in the name of Jehovah; yet he appeared unmoved by their applause. Had the history of Jesus, like those which we have of Socrates or Cyrus, been merely the work of a human writer, ambitious to adorn a favourite character with the most splendid qualities of a philosopher or a hero, we should never have known how his mind was engaged in this situation. The Saviour must be divine, his historian must be inspired, the fact must be true; for man could not have invented such a circumstance, that this meek and lowly Saviour took no notice of the zeal and homage of his friends, because his heart was filled with compassion for his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood. For it was then, amidst the acclamation of his disciples, that he beheld the city and wept over it, while he foretold the evils which the rejection of him would bring upon it. "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes."

An angel proclaimed his birth to the shepherds; and wise men from the east paid such attention to the new-born Saviour, that the jealousy of Herod was excited, and attempts made to destroy him. But this wonderful infant was brought up in a state of obscurity, in a place of no repute, and known by no higher description than that of the carpenter's son. In the course of his ministry he appeared and was treated as a poor man, he had no certain dwelling-place, he submitted to receive supplies for his support from the contributions of a few of his followers, for the most of them were poor like himself. And though he wrought many wonderful works for the relief of the necessitous and miserable, he admitted no alteration in his own external state, but was content to be poor and despised, for our sakes, to the end of his life. I think the only occasion on which he permitted a public acknowledgment of his person and character, was when he fulfilled this prophecy. And still he was the same meek and lowly Saviour As his kingdom was not of this world, neither were there any marks of human grandeur in his procession. He approached Jerusalem, attended, indeed, by a concourse of people, but riding upon an ass, and weeping for his enemies.

The passage of the Messiah which follows the chorus of the heavenly host, is taken from these verses. It does not include the whole of them. In one clause there is a small alteration in the expression, but it does not affect the sense. Instead of, "He is just, having salvation," it is, "He is a righteous Saviour."

We may notice,

I. The prophet's address,—"O daughter of Zion and Jerusalem."

II. The exhortation to joy,—"Rejoice and shout."

III. The cause assigned for this joy,—"Thy King cometh."

IV. The characters of the King,—"A righteous Saviour."

V. His great design,—"To speak peace to the heathen."

I. The address,—"O daughter of Zion and Jerusalem." Zion and Jerusalem are in differently used as emblems of the church, or professing people of God. When they occur together, as here, contradistinguished from each other, Zion, the city of David, the seat of government, and of the temple-worship, may denote the principal persons of the ecclesiastical and civil state; and Jerusalem may be expressive of the people at large, the daughters of a place signifying, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants. They boasted that they were the Lord's peculiar people; they had the prophecies and promises concerning Messiah in their hands, and were professedly expecting and waiting for his appearance. They are, therefore, called upon to rejoice in it. But when he actually came, though he came to his own, to his own na

tion, city and temple; his own people, to whose affection and allegiance he had the justest claim, received him not, John i. 11. There were a few, however, who truly waited for him as the hope and consolation of Israel, at the time of his birth; and many more were afterwards convinced by his gracious words and works, that he only had the words of eternal life, and became his followers. By their acknowledged principles, they were all bound to acknowledge that prophet whom Moses had foretold God would raise up among them like unto himself (Deut. xviii. 15—19; Acts vii. 37), that is, to be, as he had been, a lawgiver, to institute a new dispensation of the true religion; and their refusal involved them, as a nation, in the punishment, which Moses had likewise denounced against those who should refuse to hearken to him. Thus their peculiar advantage in possessing a divine revelation, while the rest of mankind were left ignorant of the will of God, proved an aggravation of their guilt, and rendered their obstinacy more inexcusable, and their condemnation more severe. I am bound to take every opportunity of noticing the striking parallel in this respect, between the Jewish nation in our Saviour's time, and the nations, who, since that period, have admitted the New Testament as a revelation from God. By assuming the Christian name, and so far calling the Saviour Lord, while they reject the spirit and design of the gospel, and treat the ministers of it with neglect or contempt, they tread in the steps, and share in the guilt, of those who pretended to expect Messiah, and yet crucified him when he appeared among them. In person he could be crucified but once; but the scripture speaks of those who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame. How far this is the case of the persons who can bear to hear of his passion and his kingdom when made the subject of a musical entertainment, but upon no other occasion, deserves their serious consideration.

II. The exhortation can only be complied with by those who are sensible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to save. To these the prophet brings a joyful message, and they will rejoice and shout. The joy of harvest (Isa. ix. 3), and of the victors in war when dividing the spoil of the vanquished, is celebrated with shouting. But sinners who by the knowledge of Messiah, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far superior, in kind and degree, to any satisfaction that temporal things can afford. It is a joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. Jesus, when known and received by faith, is, in the highest sense, light to those who sit in darkness, health to the sick, food to the hungry, and rest to the weary soul. Thus many rejoiced in his goodness when he was upon earth; and he still has a people, and will have to the end of time, who do and shall rejoice in him upon these accounts, though every spring of temporal joy should be dried up. They who know his name, and put their trust in him, are warranted to appropriate those strong expressions of another prophet: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18.

III. The ground and cause of this joy is assigned,—"Thy King cometh." Messiah is a king. This title he avowed to Pilate (Mark xv. 2), by whose order it was affixed over him upon his cross. That this was not a slight and arbitrary circumstance, but providential and important, we may, I think, infer from the care taken by the evangelists to preserve the remembrance of it, for it is recorded by them all. He is, indeed, King of kings, King and Lord of nations, King of worlds; but he is here spoken of as King of Zion. The kingdom he came to establish upon earth is not of this world, nor like the kingdoms of the world. The maxims, language, interests, and aims of it, are peculiar to itself. His power and providence rule over all; but he is only known, admired, and willingly obeyed by the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, who, though they are in the world, are not of it, but strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Their πολίτευμα, or true citizenship, is in heaven, Phil. ii. 20. These are his peculiar people. And though they partake with others in the changes and trials incident to this mortal life, and have their several departments and duties assigned them according to his will, as members of society, and it does not yet appear what they shall be (1 John iii. 2); they are even now the children and servants of the Lord, and he manifests himself to them as he does not to others. Happy are these his subjects who dwell under his shadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he bruises and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden sceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free consent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have at all times access; and from whence they receive, in answer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their sins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed supply answerable to all their wants, cares, services, and conflicts. So that, though they are surrounded with snares, and fiercely opposed by many enemies, they cannot be overpowered, for the Lord himself is their king and their Saviour. We have,

IV. Two characters of this King,—"He is just, having salvation," or, as it is in the passage of the Messiah, "He is a righteous Saviour."

1. He is righteous.—His kingdom is founded in righteousness. It is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death, by which he made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. As his people receive and expect all from his hand, so likewise for his sake. Such is his command, and such is his promise. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 14. In pleading their cause, and managing their concerns, he is their righteous advocate. And therefore, because his intercession is founded upon a righteous stipulation, which he has completely fulfilled, he does not say, "Father," I ask, but "I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," John xvii. 24.

2. He is a Saviour.—Having salvation in himself; yea, he is their salvation, Isa. xii. 2. His wisdom, power, compassion, and determined purpose, are all engaged to save them fully, freely, and for ever; to save them from guilt, from Satan, and from sin, through all the dangers and trials of this life; to save them to the uttermost, till he fixes them finally out of the reach of all evil, and puts them in possession of all the happiness of which their natures are capable, in a conformity to his own image, and the enjoyment of unclouded, uninterrupted communion with God.

V. His great design was not confined to Israel after the flesh; "he shall speak peace to the Heathen" also. His kingdom comprises, besides the believing posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a great multitude gathered from amidst all nations, people, and languages, from the east and the west, from the north and the south, Luke xiii. 28, 29. Though the Heathen were universally alienated from God, by evil works and an evil conscience, he has undertaken to reconcile them, and to bring those near who were once afar off. By their knowledge of him, their prisons shall be opened, their chains broken (Isa. xlv. 14), their condemnation reversed, and they shall be renewed, and accepted in the Beloved, as the true children of Abraham. He shall likewise conciliate peace between Jew and Gentile, make of both one people (Eph. ii. 13—16), pulling down the walls of separation and prejudice, that with one heart and mind they may love, serve, and praise him. For where faith in him obtains, all distinctions are lost and superseded. There is then, neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all, Col. iii. 11.

Much has been already done by the gospel. Multitudes have been turned from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God. And we expect a time when this promise will be more extensively and literally fulfilled; when the kingdom shall be the Lord's to the end of the earth; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, all Israel shall be saved, and the nations shall learn war no more.

From these characters of the Saviour, we may collect the character of his people. For they beholding his glory, are changed (according to the measure of their faith) into the same image. The incommunicable perfections of God, such as his sovereignty, and all-sufficiency, can only produce in his people correspondent impressions of reverence, submission, and dependence; an attempt to be like him in these respects would be highly impious, and was indeed the original source of our apostacy from him. Man, by indulging a desire of being like God, rebelled against him, aspired at independence, and preferred the gratification of his own will to the righteous and equitable commands of his Maker. The unavoidable consequence of this madness is misery. It is not possible that he should be happy, till he be reduced to his proper state of subordination. But that light of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which is revealed to the renewed heart by the gospel, has a transforming effect upon those who receive it; they are made partakers of a divine nature, and resemble him, whose they are, and whom they serve, in righteousness, goodness, and truth, Eph. v. 9.

They are righteous as he is righteous. I speak not of their relative state, as they are accepted and accounted righteous in the Beloved, but of their real character. They learn of him to love righteousness and hate iniquity, Psal. xlv. 7. Their principles are right, drawn from the revealed truths of God. They comport themselves as becomes weak and unworthy sinners, and ascribe the glory of their salvation to the Lord alone; and therefore the general tenor of their conduct is governed by the righteous rules of his precepts; of which they have the most endearing and animating exemplification in the conduct of their Saviour; from him they learn to frame their tempers, desires, and hopes, and thus give evidence that they are, in deed and in truth, a saved people. His love, in proportion as it is realized in their hearts by faith, teaches them likewise to love one another, and to exercise benevolence to all men. When they understand the true nature of his spiritual kingdom, which consisteth not in external distinctions and forms, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. xiv. 17); and that it is his great design to form to himself a people from amongst the nations of the earth, who shall be one body, enlivened by one and the same spirit, they acquire a large and comprehensive mind. They rise above the influence of names, parties, and di-

visions; are freed from the narrow views and interests of self; and put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance and forgiveness (Col. iii. 12), in conformity to the pattern and will of their great exemplar. Thus he speaks peace to them, and hushes all their angry tumultuous passions into a calm.

Such is t.e spirit and tendency of the gospel. Let us try ourselves by this touchstone, measure ourselves by this rule, and weigh ourselves in these balances of the sanctuary. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, have put off the old man, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds. If he be indeed your King, your consciences will bear you witness that you revere, imitate and obey him. If he be your Saviour, you certainly must be sensible yourselves, and others must observe that you are different from what you once were.

And if any of you should be convinced, that hitherto you have been a christian only in name and in form, but destitute of that which constitutes the life and power of real godliness, this will be a good beginning. For though it be high time that you should in good earnest attend to these things, blessed be God it is not yet too late. He is a righteous and a gracious Saviour; seek him as such, and he will speak peace to you also. His sure promise is recorded for your encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out, John i. 37.

SERMON XII.

EFFECTS OF MESSIAH'S APPEARANCE.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. Is. xxxv. 5, 6.

How beautiful and magnificent is the imagery by which the prophet, in this chapter, represents the effects of Messiah's appearance! The scene, proposed to our view, is a barren and desolate wilderness. But when he, who in the beginning said "Let there be light, and there was light," condescends to visit this wilderness, the face of nature is suddenly changed by his presence. Fountains and streams of water burst forth in the burning desert, the soil becomes fruitful, clothed with verdure, and adorned with flowers. The towering cedars, which were the glory of Lebanon, and the richest pastures, which were the excellency of Carmel, present themselves to the eye, where, a little before, all was uncomfortable and dreary. How is it, that so few of those who value themselves upon their taste, and who profess to be admirers of pastoral poetry in particular, are struck with the elegance and beauty of this description? Alas, we can only ascribe their indifference to the depravity of the human heart. They would, surely, have admired this picture, could they have met with it in any of their favourite authors; but descriptive paintings in this style, so exquisitely combining grandeur with simplicity, are only to be found in the Bible, a book which their unhappy prejudices and passions too often lead them to depreciate and neglect. But they who have a scriptural and spiritual taste, not only admire this passage as a description of a pleasing change in outward nature, but consider it as a just and expressive representation of a more important, a moral change, of which they have themselves been, in a measure, the happy subjects. The barren wilderness reminds them of the state of mankind by the fall, and of their own hearts, before Messiah, the Sun of righteousness, arose upon them with healing, with light, power, and comfort, in his beams. In that memorable hour, old things passed away, and all things became new. The Lord, by shining into their hearts, and shewing them his glory in the person of Christ, has created for them a new heaven and a new earth. The works of God around them in his creation and providence assume a different appearance. Before, they lived without him in the world; but now, they see his hand wherever they look, they hear his voice in every event; for now the principles of his grace are planted in their souls, and they are no longer barren nor unfruitful, but are filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to his praise, Phil. i. 11.

The verses which I have read exhibit the effects of Messiah's power and goodness, by another image equally pleasing. Not only the wilderness, but the inhabitants of the wilderness partake of the virtue of the great Redeemer. He finds them in circumstances of distress, which he only can relieve. But when he comes the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb have voices given them to resound his praise. These mighty works, in their literal sense, marked his character, and confirmed his claims when he was upon earth; and to these he himself appealed in proof of his being the promised Saviour whom the prophets had foretold, and that no other was to be expected, Matth. xi. 3—6.

But the words have a still more sublime and important sense. As the great Physician, he cured all manner of bodily diseases and infirmities. But this was not the principal design for which he came into the world. The maladies to which sin has subjected the body, are but emblems of the more dreadful evils which it has brought upon the soul. He came to open the eyes of the mind; to make the obstinate will attentive and obedient to the voice of God to invigorate our benumbed

and paralytic faculties, that we may be active and cheerful in his service; and to open our lips, that our mouths may shew forth his praise. I have a good hope that I may warrantably say, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," Luke iv. 21. Some of you who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord

These different effects are produced by one simple, but powerful operation. While Lazarus lay in the grave, all his natural powers were inactive. But when the voice of the Son of God restored him to life (John xi. 43), he was, of course, immediately enabled to see, to hear, to move, and to speak. Thus, while we were spiritually dead, we were necessarily blind, deaf, dumb, and motionless, with respect to all the objects and faculties of that life of God in the soul, which is the perfection and honour of our nature. When we are made partakers of this life, by a new and heavenly birth, then our spiritual senses are brought into exercise, then the eyes of the blind are opened, to see the beauty and glory of divine truths: we hear the voice of God, we feel a liberty to walk and act in his service, and our tongues are taught to praise him. Here are four chief effects of a work of grace upon the heart, which distinguish believers from the rest of mankind.

And these effects are all to be ascribed to Messiah. For they are all wrought by the agency of his Holy Spirit. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which are absolutely necessary, as well for the perpetuating of his gospel from age to age, as for making it efficacious and successful, are bestowed upon sinners wholly upon the account of his mediation. It was, when he ascended on high and led captivity captive, that he procured these blessings for rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them, Psal. lxviii. 18 And it was only for his sake, and on the account of what he has to accomplish in the fulness of time, as intimated in the promise of the seed of the woman appointed to bruise the serpent's head, that there were any gracious communications afforded to fallen man, from the first entrance of sin into the world. But now the Redeemer's great work is fulfilled, his salvation is more openly revealed and applied by the publication of the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, and sinners hear the voice of God and live. Then all the changes prefigured and predicted in my text take place, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field.

1. They were once blind, but now they see. The religion of true believers is not the effect of imagination and blind impulse, but is derived from a solid knowledge, which will bear the strictest scrutiny, and is the reasonable service of an enlightened understanding. They see God; their apprehensions of him are, in some measure, answerable to his greatness and his goodness, and inspire them with reverence and love. Their conceptions of other things in which they are most nearly interested, are agreeable to the truth. Sin appears to them hateful in itself, as well as mischievous in its consequences; and holiness, not only necessary by the ordination of God, but desirable for its own sake, as essentially belonging to the true dignity and happiness of man. They know themselves; they see and feel that they are such creatures as the Bible describes them to be, weak, depraved, and vile. Of course, they see the folly of attempting to recommend themselves to God, and can no longer place any dependence on what they once accounted their wisdom, power, or righteousness; and therefore they see the absolute necessity of a Saviour. They see, likewise, and approve the method of salvation proposed by the gospel, as worthy of the wisdom and justice of God, and every way adapted to the exigencies of their sins, wants, and fears. They see and admire the excellence, dignity, and sufficiency of him, on whom their help is laid. His power, and authority engage their confidence, his love captivates and fixes their hearts. They see the vanity of the present state, and the vast importance of eternity. In these respects they have all of them a good understanding, however inferior in natural capacity or acquired knowledge to the wise men of the world.

2. Their knowledge, so far as they have attained, is not merely speculative, cold, and indistinct, like the light of the moon. The Sun of righteousness has shined into their hearts. The light they enjoy is vital, cheering, and effective. Because they thus see, they hear likewise. They were once deaf to the voice of God, whether he spoke by his word or his providence, whether in the language of mercy or judgment. But now their deaf ears are unstopped. They are now attentive, submissive, and willing to receive his instructions, and to obey his commands. With them, one "Thus saith the Lord," has the force of a thousand arguments. They desire no farther proof of a doctrine, no other warrant for their practice, no other reason for any dispensation. than Thus the Lord has said, This he requires, and, This is his appointment. Thus their wills are brought into subjection; and they so understand, as to believe and obey.

3. Farther, with their sight and hearing they receive power and activity. Once they were tied and bound in the chain of their sins, or like a man benumbed with a dead palsy, unable to move. If they sometimes seemed to express desires that might be called good with respect to their object, they were faint and ineffectual. But now their fetters are broken, the health and strength of their souls is restored, and God has wrought in them not only to will but also to do according to his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13. It is not more

wonderful that a cripple should suddenly recover the use of his limbs, than that a person who has long been fettered in sinful habits should be enabled to move and act with alacrity in the service of God. But in the day of divine power sinners are made both willing and able. How burdensome was that which they once accounted their religion! how little comfort did it yield them! how little did it assist them against their passions or against their fears! But all things are become new, since they have attained to a life of faith in the Son of God. Their religious service is now pleasant, and their warfare against sin and the world victorious. Their obligations, motives, resources, encouragements, and prospects inspire them with a holy vigour to run, with patience and perseverance, the race that is set before them.

4. Having their sight and hearing thus restored, and their hearts enlarged to walk at liberty in the ways of wisdom, they are no longer dumb, silent, and sullen, but, out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths speak the language of gratitude, praise, and joy. For though most people have the faculty of speech, and can use, or rather abuse their tongues fluently; though we are sufficiently expert from our childhood, in the dialects of falsehood, profaneness, and folly; yet, by nature, we are dumb with respect to the language that becomes us, as the creatures of God, and as those who have sinned against him, and yet are invited to seek his mercy. But when grace teaches the heart, then the heart teaches the mouth, Prov. xvi. 23. When we believe, then we speak, yea, we sing and greatly rejoice; as it is written, "In that day I will praise thee; though thou wast angry, thine anger is turned away," Isa. xii. 1. And again, "The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous," Psal. cxviii. 15. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say, That he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever, Psal. cvii. 1, 2.

It is of great importance to examine ourselves by this test, and not to be satisfied with our knowledge of the gospel, any farther than our consciences bear us witness, that it has produced a real moral change in our tempers, conduct, and pursuits. For there is a knowledge which is falsely so called. It puffeth up, but edifieth not. Our Lord's declaration deserves our most serious attention: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not may see, and that they which see, might be made blind," John ix. 39. It is very possible, yea, very easy, by the help of books, sermons, and converse, to acquire an orderly and systematic knowledge of divine truths; it may be learnt thus, like any other branch of human science, and the head be well stored with orthodox sentiments; and there may be an ability to prove and defend them, in a way of argumentation, while the heart is utterly a stranger to their salutary influence. Such characters are too common. None make a greater parade and boast of seeing than these persons. None are more fatally blinded. They smile with disdain when they speak of a self-righteousness founded upon prayers, alms-deeds, and sacraments, but are not aware that they themselves live in the very spirit of the Pharisees (Luke xviii. 2), so clearly described and so expressly condemned in the New Testament. Their supposed knowledge of the doctrines which they misunderstand and abuse, is the righteousness on which they build their hopes; and trusting to this, they despise all those who are stricter in practice than themselves, as ignorant and legal, and discover almost as great dislike to close and faithful preaching as they could do to poison. Though the doctrines of the gospel, when rightly received, are productive of godliness, it is to be feared there are people who espouse and plead for them to quiet their consciences, by furnishing them with excuses for the sins they are unwilling to forsake. It is not surprising that they who are displeased with the yoke of our Lord's precepts should seem friendly to the idea of salvation without the works of the law. The notion of the final perseverance of believers may afford a pillow for those to rest on, who, being at present destitute of all feeling of spiritual life, labour to persuade themselves that they are christians, because they had some serious thoughts, and made some profession of the truth, many years ago. So likewise, in what the scriptures teach of the total inability of fallen man, they think they have a plea to justify their negligence and sloth, and therefore are not disposed to contradict the testimony. The invitation and command to wait, and watch, and strive in the ways and means of the Lord's appointment, they evade, as they think, with impunity, by confessing the charge, and saying, I am a poor creature indeed, I can do nothing of myself aright, and therefore to what purpose should I attempt to do any thing? A minister may preach upon these points, in general terms, and obtain their good word. But if he speaks plainly and faithfully to conscience; if he bears testimony not only against dead works, but against a dead faith,—against spiritual pride, evil tempers, evil speaking, love of the world, and sinful compliances; if he insists that the branches of the true vine should bear grapes, and not the same fruit as the bramble; hearers of this stamp will think they do God service by censuring all he can say as low and legal trash. How awful! that people should be blinded by the very truths which they profess to believe! Yet I fear such cases are too frequent. God grant a delusion of this kind may never be found amongst us! For if the salt itself should lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? Matth. v. 13. May we come simply to the light,

with a desire of seeing more of ourselves, and more of our Saviour, that we may be more humble and spiritual, more afraid of sin, more watchful and successful in striving against it, and, in our whole conversation, more conformable to our glorious Head!

But to return:—From what has been offered upon this subject we may observe,

1. That true christianity is friendly to society, and to the common interests of mankind. It is the source of peace, tenderness, benevolence, and every humane temper. It is calculated to soothe the fierce disposition, to enlarge the selfish spirit, and to transform the lion into the lamb. What then must we think of those pretended friends to liberty and free inquiry, whose unhappy zeal is employed to rob us of the only light and balm of life! who, by their misrepresentations and cavils, endeavour to persuade others, though they cannot effectually persuade themselves, that the gospel, a scheme so wise in its constitution, so salutary in its design, so powerful in its effects, is no better than an imposition, the contrivance of superstitious or artful men! Why should they attempt to take away the foundation of our hope and the spring of our comfort (if they were able), when they know they have nothing to substitute in their place! Let us think of them with that compassion which their state calls for, and pray for them, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25.

2. The change thus wrought is great, marvellous, and, if not so frequent, might be styled miraculous. It is more than education, example, persuasion, or resolution can perform. It is the work of God alone to open the blind eyes, to change the heart of stone into flesh, and to raise the dead.

This thought should exclude boasting. The happy subjects of this change were no better by nature or practice than others. They have nothing but what they have received. The glory and praise is due to the Lord alone. It should likewise soften their censure of those who are still in a state of alienation from God, or at least prevent the emotions of anger and resentment towards them. They know not what they do. Their danger should excite our pity and our friendly endeavours to recover them from the error of their way. And, especially, we should be careful so to regulate our behaviour, that, if they obey not the word, they may without the word be convinced and won (1 Pet. iii. 1) by the force of our example. If the Lord be pleased to do that for them which he has done for us, their dislike of us, and their opposition to us, will be quickly at an end; and though they set out after us, they may possibly make a swifter progress in the christian life than we have done. Thus, though Saul of Tarsus approached Damascus as an enemy and a persecutor, when the scales fell from his eyes, he not only immediately joined the disciples, but in a little time became a pattern to them.

That the change is the work of God, should likewise be considered by those who, from a sense of the greatness of their sins, and the strength of their sinful habits, are ready to sink into despair. Whatever apparent difficulty there may be in your case, it is easy to divine power. All things are possible with God (Mark x. 27), and all things, likewise, are possible to him that believeth, Mark ix. 23. The promises invite you to apply to him who is the author and finisher of faith, and who has said for your encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out"

SERMON XIII.

THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. ISAIAH, xl. 11.

IT is not easy for those whose habits of life are insensibly formed by the customs of modern times, to conceive any adequate idea of the pastoral life, as it obtained in the eastern countries, before that simplicity of manners, which characterized the early ages, was corrupted by the artificial and false refinements of luxury. Wealth, in those days, consisted principally in flocks and herds, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, who were, to speak in modern language, persons of high distinction, were likewise shepherds. The book of Genesis, which is an authentic and infallible history of the most ancient times, exhibits a manner of living so different from our own, that, perhaps, few persons are qualified to enter fully into the spirit of the description. The poets seem to have derived their idea of the golden age from some imperfect tradition of this primitive state; and, if we compare it with the state of things around us, methinks we have reason to say, "How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed!" Lam. iv. 1. The opulence of Jacob may be conjectured from the present he sent to his brother Esau, Gen. xxxii. 14, 15. Yet Jacob attended his flocks himself, in the drought by day, and in the frost by night. Gen. xxxi. 40. The vigilance, the providence, the tenderness, necessary to the due discharge of the shepherd's office, have been frequently applied in describing the nature and ends of government: and it has been esteemed a high encomium of a good king, to style him the shepherd of his people. This character Messiah, the Saviour, condescends to bear; and happy are they, who, with a pleasing consciousness, can say,

"We are his people and the sheep of his pasture," Psal. c. 3.

The passage will lead me to speak of the shepherd, the flock, and his care and tenderness over them

I. Our Lord expressly styles himself the *Shepherd*, the *good Shepherd of the Sheep* (John x. 11, 14), and the apostle Peter styles him the *chief Shepherd*, 1 Peter v. 4. His faithful ministers have the honour to be under-shepherds; he appoints, and qualifies them to feed his flock. They are the messengers of his will, but they can do nothing without him; they can only communicate what they receive, and cannot watch over the flock, unless they are themselves watched over by him, Psal. cxxvii. 1. For, with respect to efficacy, he is the chief, and indeed, the sole Shepherd. The eyes of all are upon him, and his eye is upon, and over all his flock. The Old-Testament church had a shepherd, and their shepherd was Jehovah, Psal. xxiii. 1. Unless therefore the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls likewise be Jehovah, we fall unspeakably short of the privilege of ancient Israel, if their Shepherd was almighty, and if ours could be but a creature. Surely we could not then say, what yet the apostle affirms, that we have a better covenant, established upon better promises (Heb. viii. 6); since Messiah himself is expressly declared to be the surety and the mediator of this covenant. But would it not be better upon this supposition, with David, who could say, "Jehovah is my Shepherd," than with us, who are entrusted to the care of a delegated and inferior keeper, if Jesus be not Jehovah? Besides, who but Jehovah can relieve the necessities of multitudes in all places, in the same moment, and be equally near and attentive to them in every age? The sinner, who is enlightened to know himself, his wants, enemies, and dangers, will not dare to confide in any thing short of an almighty arm; he needs a shepherd, who is full of wisdom, full of care, full of power; able, like the sun, to shine upon millions at once, and possessed of those incommunicable attributes of Deity, omniscience and omnipresence. Such is our great Shepherd; and he is eminently the good Shepherd also, for he laid down his life for the sheep, and has redeemed them to God by his own blood.

II. A *shepherd* is a relative name; it has reference to a *flock*. This great and good Shepherd has a flock, whom he loved from everlasting, and whom, having loved, he will love to the end, John xiii. 1.

Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse!

He humbled himself for their sakes, submitted to partake of their nature and their sorrows, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He died for his sheep, the just for the unjust (1 Pet. iii. 18), to redeem them from the curse of the law, from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the power of Satan, and to bring them to God. They, by nature, are all gone astray, every one to his own way (Isa. liii. 6); but having thus bought them with his blood, in his own appointed time, he seeks, finds, and restores his sheep. By the power of his word and Spirit, he makes himself known to their hearts, causes them to hear and understand his voice, and guides them into his fold. Then they become his sheep in the sense of my text. They are under his immediate protection and government.

Considered as individuals, they are fitly described by the name of sheep. A sheep is a weak, defenceless, improvident creature; prone to wander, and if once astray, is seldom known to return of its own accord. A sheep has neither strength to fight with the wolf, nor speed to escape from him; nor has it the foresight of the ant, to provide its own sustenance. Such is our character, and our situation Unable to take care of ourselves, prone to wander from our resting place, exposed to enemies which we can neither withstand nor avoid, without resource in ourselves, and taught, by daily experience, the insufficiency of every thing around us: yet, if this Shepherd be our Shepherd, weak and helpless as we are, we may be of good courage. If we can say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd," we may make the same inferences which he did, "Therefore I shall not want;" therefore I need not fear.

Collectively they are a flock. They are not, indeed, in one place. They are scattered abroad, dispersed through different ages and countries, separated by seas and mountains, and, too often, by misapprehensions and prejudices, by names and forms; and only a very small part of the flock are known to each other. But they are all equally known to him, and equally under his eye. In his view they are one flock, one body; they are animated by one and the same spirit; their views, hopes, and aims are the same; and, yet a little while, they shall be all brought together, a number without number, to rejoice and to join in worship, before his throne of glory. For they have an inheritance reserved for them in heaven (1 Pet. i. 4, 5), and they shall be safely kept, while they are sojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Israel is their keeper.

III. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. The word is not restrained to feeding. It includes all the branches of the shepherd's office. He shall act the part of a shepherd to his flock. We have a beautiful miniature description of what he has engaged to do, and what he actually does, for his people, as their Shepherd, in the twenty-third Psalm. And the subject is more largely illustrated in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy. His sheep, from age to age, have

been witnesses to the truth of his promises. He has a flock at present who rejoice in his care, and greater multitudes, as yet unborn, shall successively arise in their appointed seasons, and call him blessed, Psal. lxxii. 17. For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

He feeds them.—He leads them into green and pleasant pastures. These pastures are, his word and ordinances, by which he communicates to them of his own fulness; for in strict propriety of speech, he himself is their food. They eat his flesh and drink his blood, John vi. 54. This was once thought a hard saying (John vi. 58) by some of his professed followers, and is still thought so by too many. But it is his own saying, and therefore I am not concerned either to confirm or to vindicate it. The knowledge they receive by faith, of his incarnation and sufferings unto death, of the names he bears, and of the offices and relations in which he is pleased to act for them, is the life and food of their souls. The expression of feeding them, is agreeable to the analogy he has been pleased to establish between the natural and the spiritual life. As the strength of the body is maintained and renewed by eating and drinking; so they who, in this sense, feed upon him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving, even they live (John vi. 57) by him; for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

He guides them.—First by his example. He has trodden the path of duty and trial before them; and they perceive and follow his footsteps. Again, by his word and Spirit he teaches them the way in which they should go; and both inclines and enables them to walk in it, Is. xxx. 21. He guides them, likewise, by his providence; he appoints the bounds of their habitations, the line and calling in which they are to serve him, and orders and adjusts the circumstances of their lives according to his infinite wisdom, so as finally to accomplish his gracious designs in their favour.

He guards them.—It is written concerning him, "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God," Micah v. 4. If we conceive of a flock of sheep feeding in the midst of wolves, who are restrained from breaking in upon them, not by any visible inclosure, but merely by the power of the shepherd's eye, which keeps them in awe and at a distance, it will give us some idea of the situation of his people. He provides them food in the midst of many and mighty enemies (Psal. xxiii. 5), who envy them their privilege, but cannot prevent it. If he should withdraw his attention from the flock for a single minute, they would be worried. But he has promised to keep them night and day (Is. xxvii. 3), and every moment; therefore their enemies plot and rage in vain. Their visible foes are numerous; but if we could look into the invisible world, and take a view of the subtilty, malice, machinations, and assiduity of the powers of darkness, who are incessantly watching for opportunities of annoying them, we should have a most striking conviction, that a flock so defenceless and feeble in themselves, and against which such a combination is formed, can only be kept by the power of God.

He heals them.—A good shepherd will examine the state of his flock. But there is no attention worthy of being compared with his. Not the slightest circumstance in their concerns escapes his notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exercises of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and disconsolate in their spirits, he seasonably revives them. Nor are they in heaviness without a need-be for it. All his dispensations towards them are medicinal, designed to correct, or to restrain, or to cure, the maladies of their souls. And they are adjusted, by his wisdom and tenderness, to what they can bear, and to what their case requires. It is he likewise, who heals their bodily sickness, and gives them help in all their temporal troubles. He is represented to us, as counting their sighs (Psal. lvi. 8), putting their tears into his bottle, recording their sorrows in his book of remembrance; and even as being himself touched with a feeling of their infirmities (Heb. iv. 15), as the head feels for the members of the body.

He restores them.—The power and subtilty of their enemies are employed to force or entice them from his rule, and too often prevail for a season. The sheep turn aside into forbidden paths; and whenever they do, they would wander farther and farther, till they were quite lost again, if he were not their Shepherd. If he permits them to deviate, he has a time to convince them, that it was an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord their Shepherd (Jer. ii. 19), and to humble them, and to bring them back. Thus they become more sensible of their own weakness, and of their obligations to his gracious care; for he will not suffer their enemies to triumph over them. He will not lose one of his true flock; not one convinced sinner, who has, in deed and in truth, surrendered and entrusted his all to him. They must, and they shall smart and mourn for their folly; but he will, in due season, break their snares, and lead them again into the paths of peace, for his own name's sake.

The flock are not all sheep. There are among them lambs. These are especially mentioned, and for these he expresses a peculiar tenderness. He will gather them in his arm, and carry them in his bosom. Though they are weaklings, they shall not be left behind. This is a beautiful and pathetic image. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep

up with the flock, it shall be carried. This clause affords encouragement,

1. To young people.—Early serious impressions are often made upon the hearts of children, which we are to cherish, by directing their thoughts to the compassion of the good Shepherd, who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God," Mark x. 14. This high and holy one, who humbles himself to notice the worship of the heavenly host, hears the prayers of worms upon the earth; and his ear is open to the prayers of a child, no less so, than to the prayer of a king.

2. To young converts.—These, at whatever age, are children in the Lord's family, lambs in his flock. They are, as yet, weak, unsettled, and unexperienced. Almost every day brings them into a new and untried situation. They often meet with opposition and discouragement, where they have promised themselves help and countenance. Perhaps their nearest friends are displeased with them. They are liable, likewise, while they are enquiring the way to Zion, to be perplexed by the various opinions and angry contentions prevailing among the different religious persons or parties to whom they may address themselves. They are frequently discouraged by the falls and miscarriages of professors, some of whom, it is possible, they may have admired, and looked up to, as patterns for their own imitation. Add to these things, what they suffer from new and unexpected discoveries of the evil and deceitfulness of their hearts; the mistakes they commit, in judgment and practice, for want of a more solid and extensive knowledge of the scriptures; and the advantage the great enemy of their souls derives from these their various difficulties to assault their peace and obstruct their progress. What would become of them in such circumstances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promised to lead, and uphold them, with the arm of his power?

There is, likewise, particular mention made of "those who are with young." These he will gently lead. If we take the word according to our version, it may signify a state of conviction or trouble. Many are the afflictions of the righteous (Psal. xxxiv. 19), by which they are often wearied and heavy laden. But when their spirits are overwhelmed within them, he knoweth their path. Jacob would not permit his cattle that were with young to be over-driven for one day, lest they should die, Gen. xxxiii. 13. Much less will this good Shepherd suffer the burdened among his flock to be hurried and tempted beyond what they are able, or what he will enable them to bear.

But the word signifies, those that have young, rather than those that are with young. Two sorts of persons in the Lord's flock, who come under this description, feel an especial need of his compassion, tenderness, and patience.

1. He only knows the feelings of the hearts of parents; what solicitude and anxiety they have for their young ones, the sucklings, if I may so speak, of the flock, which mingle with all their endeavours, to manage rightly the important charge committed to them, and to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2. Ministers, likewise, have painful exercises of mind. The apostle Paul speaks of travailling in birth again, till Christ be formed in our hearers, Gal. iv. 19. When we know of any newly awakened, and beginning to seek his salvation, how solicitous is our care to bring them forward, to comfort them, to warn them against the devices of their hearts, and of their enemies! And how piercing our grief and disappointment, if they miscarry! How much is felt in sympathy for the trials of the flock! What wisdom, faithfulness, courage, meekness, and unction from on high, are necessary to the due discharge of what we owe to the flocks of which we have the oversight! Who is sufficient for these things! And when we have done our best, our all, what defects and defilements have we to mourn over! But this is our great consolation, that he, who knows us, and leads us, considers our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.

In this delineation of the character and conduct of the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. xiii. 20), we have an affecting exemplar and pattern, for the imitation of those who act in the honourable office of under-shepherds, and are called, by their profession and engagement, to feed his sheep and lambs. Whether there be any ministers in our assembly, or not, you will at least permit me to speak a word to my own heart; which may, I hope, at the same time, impress your minds with a sense of our great need of your prayers. Brethren, pray for us! (1 Thes. v. 25) and pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth more faithful labourers into his harvest, Matth. ix. 38. For it is his work alone. It is not necessary, that a minister of the gospel should be in the first line of those who are admired for their abilities or literature; much less that he should be distinguished by such titles, honours, and emoluments as this world can give. But it is necessary, and of the last importance to his character and usefulness here, and to his acceptance in the great day of the Lord, that he should have a shepherd's eye and a shepherd's heart. He must serve the flock, not for filthy lucre, or by constraint (that constraint, which the apostle attributes to the love of Christ, only excepted), but willingly, and with a view to their edification, 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. And he must, indeed, serve them, not acting as a lord over God's heritage, but

as an example to the flock; not preaching himself (2 Cor. iv. 5), perverting his sacred office to the purposes of ambition or vain glory, or the acquisition of wealth; but preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, and employing all his powers to turn sinners from the error of their ways. He who winneth souls is wise, Prov. xi. 30. If it be wisdom to propose the noblest end, the faithful minister is wise; the end at which he aims, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the salvation of souls; and the recovery of one immortal soul to the favour and image of God, is, and will at length be found, a greater and more important event, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from slavery or temporal ruin. If it be wisdom, to pursue a right end by the fittest means, he is wise; he knows the gospel of Christ to be the power of God, the appointed, the effectual, the only sufficient mean for his accomplishing his great purpose; therefore, however unfashionable it may be, he is not ashamed of it, he preaches it, and he glories in it. If it be an effect of wisdom, not to be deterred from the prosecution of a great and noble design, by the censure and dislike of weak and incompetent judges, the faithful minister is truly wise. He loves his fellow creatures, and would willingly please them for their good, but he cannot fear them, because he fears and serves the Lord. He looks forward, with desire, to the day of that solemn and general visitation, when the Shepherd and Bishop of souls shall himself appear, 1 Pet. ii. 25; v. 4. And if he may then stand among those who are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved, and receive the crown of life, which his Lord has promised to them that love him (2 Tim. iv. 8),—this thought fully reconciles him to the trials of his situation; and however depreciated, misrepresented, opposed, or ill-treated here, he can say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God," Acts xx. 24.

There is a counter-part to this character described in strong and glowing language by the prophets. There are idol-shepherds, who feed not the flock, but themselves (Ezek. xxxiv. 2); who neither attempt to heal the sick, to strengthen the feeble, to bind up that which is broken, nor to recover that which has been driven away; shepherds (Isa. lvi. 10, 11), who cannot understand, greedy, lovers of gain—and who, by a change of metaphor, are compared to slumbering watchmen, and dumb dogs that cannot bark. The New Testament teaches us to expect that such persons, under the name of ministers, will be found likewise in the visible church of Christ: men of corrupt minds (1 Tim. vi. 5; Rom. xvi. 18), destitute of the truth, who serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own belly; men who are of the world (1 John iv. 5), and speak of the world; and therefore the world heareth and favoureth them. But, alas!—neither the wretched slave who toils at the galley-oar, nor he that is doomed to labour in a deep mine, where the light of the sun never reaches him, nor the lunatic who howls in a chain, are such emphatical objects of our compassion, as the unhappy man who prostitutes the name and function of a minister of Christ to the gratification of his pride and avarice; and whose object is not the welfare of the flock, but the possession of the fleece (Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8); who intrudes into the post of a watchman, but gives no alarm of the impending danger. If the scriptures be true; if the gospel be not indeed, as Pope Leo X. profanely styled it, *a lucrative fable*; the more he accumulates riches, the more he rises in dignity, the more his influence extends, the more he is to be commiserated. He may have the reward he seeks: He may be admired and flattered; he may for a season, be permitted to withstand and discountenance the efforts of the Lord's faithful servants; he may shine in the accomplishments of a scholar or a courtier: But nothing less than repentance, and faith in the Redeemer, whose name and cause he has dishonoured, can finally screen him from the full effect of that terrible denunciation—"Wo to the idol-shepherd that forsaketh (or neglecteth) the flock: The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: His arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened, Zech. xi. 17.

SERMON XIV.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest MATTH. xi 28.

WHICH shall we admire most, the majesty, or the grace, conspicuous in this invitation? How soon would the greatest earthly monarch be impoverished, and his treasures utterly exhausted, if all that are poor and miserable had encouragement to apply freely to him, with a promise of relief fully answerable to their wants and wishes! But the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible. If millions of millions of distressed sinners seek to him for relief, he has a sufficiency for them all. His mercy is infinite to pardon all their sins; his grace is infinite to answer and exceed their utmost desires; his power is infinite, to help them in all their difficulties. A number without number have been thus waiting upon him, from age to age; and not one of them has been sent away disappointed and empty. And the streams of his bounty are still flowing, and still full. Thus the sun.

his brightest material image, has been the source of light to the earth, and to all its inhabitants, from the creation; and will be equally so to all succeeding generations, till time shall be no more. There is, indeed, an appointed hour when the sun shall cease to shine, and the course of nature shall fail. But the true Sun, the Sun of righteousness, has no variableness or shadow of turning (Mal. iv. 2; James i. 17); and they who depend upon him while in this world, shall rejoice in his light for ever. Can we hesitate to accept of these words, as affording a full proof of the divine character, the proper Godhead of our Lord and Saviour; supposing only, that he meant what he said, and that he is able to make his promise good? Can a creature, however excellent and glorious, use this language? Can a creature discharge the debts, soothe the distresses, and satisfy the desires of every individual who looks to him? Who, but the Lord God (Psal. cxlvi. 8; Isa. lxi. 2), can raise up all that are bowed down, and comfort all that mourn!

Again, as is his majesty, so is his mercy. In acts of grace amongst men there are always some limitations. If a king proclaims a pardon to a rebellious nation, there are still exceptions. Some ringleaders are excluded. Either their crimes were too great to be forgiven, or their obstinacy or influence are supposed to be too great, to render their safety consistent with the safety of the state. But the Saviour excludes none but those who wilfully exclude themselves. As no case is too hard for his power, so no person who applies to him is shut out from his compassion. Him that cometh to him, whatever his former character or conduct may have been, he will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. This glorious exercise of sovereign mercy is no less a divine attribute, than the power by which he created the heavens and the earth. It is the consideration of his mercy in pardoning sin, and in saving sinners, which causes that admiring exclamation of the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee! Micah. vii. 18.

This passage (including the two following verses) closes the first part of the Oratorio. In tracing the series of the scriptures thus far, we have considered several signal prophecies which foretold his appearance; we have seen their accomplishment in his birth and have (I hope) joined with the heavenly host, in ascribing glory to God in the highest, for this unspeakable gift and effect of his love. We have learnt from the prophets, his characters, as the great Restorer, and the great Shepherd. The evangelist proposes him to our meditation here, in a gracious and inviting attitude, as opening his high commission, proclaiming his own sovereign authority and power, and declaring his compassionate purpose, and readiness to give refreshment and rest to the weary and heavy laden.

The two principal points in the text are, the invitation and the promise.

I. The invitation is expressed in very general terms: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." There is no qualifying or restraining clause, to discourage any person who is willing to accept it. Whoever hath an ear to hear, let him hear. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. I cannot doubt but these words authorize me to address myself to every person in this assembly. I speak first to you who are spending your money for that which satisfieth not (Isa. lv. 2); who are wearied in seeking happiness where it is not to be found, and in digging pits, and hewing out cisterns for yourselves, which can hold no water (Jer. ii. 13), and have hitherto been regardless of the fountain of living waters, which is always near you. While you are pursuing the wealth or honours of this world, or wasting your time and strength in the indulgence of sensual appetites, and look no higher, are you indeed happy and satisfied? Do you find the paths in which you are led, or rather hurried and driven on, to be the paths of pleasantness and peace? Prov. iii. 7. With what face can you charge the professors of religion with hypocrisy, if you pretend to satisfaction in these ways? We have trodden them far enough ourselves, to be assured that there are feelings in your heart which contradict your assertion. You know that you are not happy, and we know it likewise. Are you quite strangers to a secret wish that you had never been born? or that you could change condition with some of the brute creation? Are you not heavy laden, burdened with guilt, and fears, and forebodings, harassed with crosses, disappointments, and mortifications? Are you not often, at least sometimes, like children in the dark, afraid of being alone, unable to support the reflections which are forced upon you in a solitary hour, when you have nothing to amuse you? And while you seem so alert and upon the wing after every kind of dissipation within your reach, is not a chief motive that impels you, a desire, if possible, of hiding yourselves from yourselves, and of calling off your attention from those thoughts which, like vultures, are ready to seize you, and prey upon you, the moment they find you unemployed? And how often do your poor expedients fail you, especially in a time of trouble, or on a sick-bed? What comfort does the world afford you then? What relief do you then derive from the companions of your vain and gay hours? Most probably, at such a season, they stand aloof from you; the house of mourning, or the chamber of sickness, is no less unpleasing to them than to yourself. They do not chuse the pain of being reminded, by a sight of your distress, how soon the case may be their own Or, if they visit you, you

find them miserable comforters. But I have to speak to you of one who is able to comfort you in all seasons, and under all circumstances, whose favour is better than life. And will you still refuse to hear his voice? What hard thing does the Lord require of you? Only to come to him for that peace and rest to which you have hitherto been strangers. But though you are invited, I know that of yourselves you will not come; you will not, and therefore you cannot. Be assured, however, the invitation does not mock you, and, if you finally refuse it, the fault will lie at your own doors. But may I not hope you will refuse no longer? The preaching of the gospel is his appointment, and has a great effect, when accompanied with the energy of his Holy Spirit, to make a willing people in the day of his power.

There are others, however, to whom this invitation speaks more directly. The convinced sinner is heavy laden with the guilt of sin, and wearied with ineffectual strivings against it. He is weary of the yoke and burden of the law, when he can neither answer its commands with cheerful and acceptable obedience, nor see any way of escaping the penalty which is due to transgressors. He sighs earnestly and anxiously for pardon and liberty. If he has an interval of comparative peace and hope, it is more derived from some occasional fervour and liveliness in the frame of his spirit, than from the exercise of faith; and therefore, as that fervour abates (and it will not always remain at the same height), his fears return. If in such a favoured moment he feels little solicitation or trouble from the evil propensities of his heart, he is willing to hope they are subdued, and that they will trouble him no more; but his triumph is short, the next return of temptation revives all his difficulties, and he is again brought into bondage. For nothing but the knowledge of the Saviour, and the supplies of his Spirit, can give stable peace to the mind, or victory over sin. A repetition of these disappointments and changes fixes a heavy burden and distress upon the mind. But here is help provided exactly suitable to the case. Comply with this invitation, come to him and he will surely give you rest.

But what is it to come to Christ? It is to believe in him, to apply to him, to make his invitation and promise our ground and warrant for putting our trust in him. On another occasion, he said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst," John vi. 35. The expressions are of the same import. When he was upon earth, many who came to him, and even followed him for a season, received no saving benefit from him. Some came to him from motives of malice and ill-will, to ensnare or insult him. Some followed him for loaves and fishes; and of others, who were frequently near him, he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," John v. 40. But they who were distressed, and came to him for relief, were not disappointed. To come to him, therefore, implies a knowledge of his power and an application for his help. To us he is not visible, but he is always near us; and as he appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee (Matthew, xxviii. 16) previous to his ascension, so he has promised to be found of those who seek him, and wait for him, in certain means of his own institution. He is seated upon a throne of grace; he is to be sought in his word, and where his people assemble in his name, for he has said, There will I be in the midst of them, Matth. xviii. 20. They therefore who read his word, frequent his ordinances, and pray unto him, with a desire that they may know him, and be remembered with the favour which he beareth to his own people (Psal. cvi. 4), answer the design of my text. They come to him, and he assures them, that whoever they are, he will in no wise cast them out. If they thus come to him, they will of course come out from the world and be separate, 2 Cor. vi. 17. If they apply to him for refuge, they will renounce all other refuge and dependence, and trust in him alone, according to the words of the prophet, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless (the helpless and comfortless) findeth mercy," Hosea xiv. 3.

II. The promise is, "I will give you rest." The word signifies both rest and refreshment. He gives a relief and cessation from former labour and bondage, and superadds a peace, a joy, a comfort which revives the weary spirit, and proves itself to be that very satisfaction which the soul had been ignorantly and in vain seeking amongst the creatures and the objects of sense.

This rest includes a freedom from the forebodings and distressing accusations of a guilty conscience; from the long and fruitless struggle between the will and the judgment; from the condemning power of the law; from the tyranny of irregular and inconsistent appetites; and from the dominion of pride and self, which make us unhappy in ourselves, and hated and despised by others: A freedom likewise from the cares and anxieties which, in such an uncertain world as this, disquiet the minds of those who have no solid scriptural dependence upon God, and especially a freedom from the dread of death, and of the things which are beyond it. In these and other respects, the believer in Jesus enters into a present rest. He is under the guidance of infinite wisdom and the protection of almighty power; he is permitted to cast all his cares upon the Lord (1 Pet. v. 7), and is

assured that the Lord careth for him. So far as he possesses by faith the spirit and liberty of his high calling, he is in perfect peace. The prophet Jeremiah has given a beautiful description and illustration of this rest of a believer (Jer. xvii. 5—8); which is rendered more striking by being contrasted with the miserable state of those who live without God in the world. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited. But blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

But besides rest there is refreshment. There are pleasures and consolations in that intercourse and communion with God to which we are invited by the gospel, which, both in kind and degree, are unspeakably superior to all that the world can bestow, and such as the world cannot deprive us of; for they have no necessary dependence upon outward situation or circumstances; they are compatible with poverty, sickness, and sufferings. They are often most sensibly sweet and lively when the streams of creature-comfort are at the lowest ebb. Many have been able to say with the apostle, "As the sufferings of Christ (those which we endure for his sake, or submit to from his hand) abound in us, so our consolation in Christ also aboundeth," 1 Cor. i. 5. The all-sufficient God can increase these communications of comfort from himself to a degree beyond our ordinary conceptions, so as not only to support his people under the most exquisite pains, but even to suspend and overpower all sense of pain, when the torment would otherwise be extreme. And he has sometimes been pleased to honour the fidelity of his servants, and to manifest his own faithfulness to them by such an interposition. One well-attested instance our own martyrology affords, that of Mr. Bainham, who suffered in the reign of Queen Mary. When he was in the fire, he addressed himself to his persecutors to this effect: "You call for miracles in proof of our doctrine, now behold one; I feel no more pain from these flames than if I was laid upon a bed of roses." But in ordinary cases, and in all cases, they who taste how good the Lord is to them that seek him, how he cheers them with the light of his countenance, and what supports he affords them in the hour of need, can without regret part with the poor perishing pleasures of sin, and encounter all the difficulties they meet with in the path of duty. Whatever their profession of his name, and their attachment to his cause may have cost them, they will acknowledge that it has made them ample amends.

Come, therefore, unto him, venture upon his gracious word, and you shall find rest for your souls. Can the world outbid this gracious offer? Can the world promise to give you rest when you are burdened with trouble? when your cisterns fail, and your gourds wither? or when you are terrified with the approach of death, when your pulse intermits, when you are about to take a final farewell of all you ever saw with your eyes, and an awful, unknown, untried, unchangeable eternity is opening upon your view? Such a moment most certainly awaits you; and when it arrives, if you die in your senses, and are not judicially given up to hardness and blindness of heart, you will assuredly tremble, if you never trembled before. Oh! be persuaded! May the Lord himself persuade you to be timely wise, to seek him now while he may be found, to call upon him while he is yet near, lest that dreadful threatening should be your portion: "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh" Prov. i. 24, 26.

SERMON XV.

MESSIAH'S EASY YOKE.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. MATTH xi. 29. 30.

THOUGH the influence of education and example may dispose us to acknowledge the gospel to be a revelation from God, it can only be rightly understood, or duly prized, by those persons who feel themselves in the circumstances of distress which it is designed to relieve. No Israelite would think of fleeing to a city of refuge, till, by having unwittingly slain a man, he was exposed to the resentment of the next of kin, the legal avenger of blood: but then, a sense of his danger would induce him readily to avail himself of the appointed method of safety. The skill of a physician may be acknowledged, in general terms, by many; but he is applied to only by the sick, Matt. ix. 12. Thus our Saviour's gracious invitation to come to him for rest, will be little regarded, till we really feel ourselves weary and heavy laden. This is a principal reason why the gospel is heard with so much indifference. For though sin be a grievous illness, and a hard bondage, yet one effect of it is, a strange stupidity and infatuation,

which renders us (like a person in a delirium) insensible of our true state. It is a happy time when the Holy Spirit, by his convincing power, removes that stupor, which, while it prevents us from fully perceiving our misery, renders us likewise indifferent to the only mean of deliverance. Such a conviction of the guilt and desert of sin, is the first hopeful symptom in a sinner's case; but it is necessarily painful and distressing. It is not pleasant to be weary and heavy-laden; but it awakens our attention to him who says, Come unto me, and I will give you rest, and makes us willing to take his yoke upon us.

Oxen are yoked to labour. From hence the yoke is a figurative expression to denote servitude. Our Lord seems to use it here, both to intimate our natural prejudices against his service, and to obviate them. Though he submitted to sufferings, reproach, and death for our sakes; though he invites us, not because he has need of us, but because we have need of him, and cannot be happy without him; yet our ungrateful hearts think unkindly of him. We conceive of him as a hard master; and suppose, that if we engage ourselves to him, we must bid farewell to pleasure, and live under a continual restraint. His rule is deemed too strict, his laws too severe; and we imagine, that we could be more happy upon our own plans, than by acceding to his. Such unjust, unfriendly, and dishonourable thoughts of him, whose heart is full of tenderness, whose bowels melt with love, are strong proofs of our baseness, blindness, and depravity; yet still he continues his invitation, "Come unto me."—As if he had said, "Be not afraid of me. Only make the experiment, and you shall find, that what you have accounted my yoke is true liberty; and that in my service, which you have avoided as burdensome, there is no burden at all; for my ways are ways of pleasantness, and all my paths are peace." I have a good hope, that many of my hearers can testify, from their own happy experience, that (according to the beautiful expression in our liturgy) his service is perfect freedom.

If we are really Christians, Jesus is our Master, our Lord, and we are his servants. It is in vain to call him Lord, Lord (Luke vi. 46), unless we keep his commandments. They who know him will love him; and they who love him will desire to please him, not by a course of service of their own devising, but by accepting his revealed will as the standard and rule, to every part of which they endeavour to conform in their tempers and in their conduct. He is likewise our Master in another sense, that is, he is our great Teacher; if we submit to him as such, we are his disciples or scholars. We cannot serve him acceptably, unless we are taught by him. The philosophers of old had their disciples, who imbibed their sentiments, and were therefore called after their names, as the Pythagoreans and Platonists, from Pythagoras and Plato. The general name of Christians, which was first assumed by the believers at Antioch (possibly by divine direction) intimates that they are the professed disciples of Christ, Acts xi. 26. If we wish to be truly wise, to be wise unto salvation, we must apply to him. For in this sense, the disciple or scholar cannot be above his Master, Luke vi. 40. We can learn of men no more than they can teach us. But he says, "Learn of me;" and he cautions us against calling any one Master upon earth. He does, indeed, instruct his people by ministers and instruments; but unless he is pleased to superadd his influence, what we seem to learn from them only, will profit us but little. Nor are the best of them so thoroughly furnished, nor so free from mistake, as to deserve our implicit confidence. But they whom he condescends to teach, shall learn, what no instruction, merely human, can impart. Let us consider the peculiar, the unspeakable advantages of being his scholars.

1. In the first place, this great Teacher can give the capacity requisite to the reception of his sublime instructions. There is no prospect of excelling in human arts and sciences, without a previous natural ability, suited to the subject. For instance, if a person has not an ear and taste for music, he will make but small proficiency under the best masters. It will be the same with respect to the mathematics, or any branch of science. A skilful master may improve and inform the scholar, if he be rightly disposed to learn, but he cannot communicate the disposition. But Jesus can open and enliven the dullest mind; he teaches the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. By nature we are untractable, and incapable of relishing divine truth, however advantageously proposed to us by men like ourselves. But happy are his scholars! he enables them to surmount all difficulties. He takes away the heart of stone, subdues the most obstinate prejudices, enlightens the dark understanding, and inspires a genius and a taste for the sublime and interesting lessons he proposes to them. In this respect, as in every other, there is none who teacheth like him, Job xxxvi. 26.

2. He teacheth the most important things. The subjects of human science are comparatively trivial and insignificant. We may be safely ignorant of them all. And we may acquire the knowledge of them all, without being wiser or better, with respect to the concernments of our true happiness. Experience and observation abundantly confirm the remark of Solomon, That he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, Eccles. i. 8, 18. Unless the heart be seasoned and sanctified by grace, the sum-total of all other acquisitions is but vanity and vexation of spirit, Eccles. ii. 17. Human learn-

ing will neither support the mind under trouble, nor weaken its attachment to worldly things, nor controul its impetuous passions, nor overcome the fear of death. The confession of the learned Grotius, towards the close of a life spent in literary pursuits, is much more generally known than properly attended to. He had deservedly a great name and reputation as a scholar; but his own reflection upon the result of his labours expresses what he learnt, not from his books and ordinary course of studies, but from the Teacher I am commending to you. He lived to leave this testimony for the admonition of the learned, or to this effect: *Ah, vitam prorsus perdidi nihil agendo laboriose!* "Alas! I have wasted my whole life in taking much pains to no purpose." But Jesus makes his scholars wise unto eternal life, and reveals that knowledge to babes, to persons of weak and confined abilities, of which the wisdom of the world can form no idea.

3. Other teachers, as I have already hinted, can only inform the head; but his instructions influence the heart. Moral philosophers, as they are called, abound in fine words and plausible speeches, concerning the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, temperance, benevolence, and equity; and their scholars learn to talk after them. But their fine and admired sentiments are mere empty notions, destitute of life and efficacy, and frequently leave them as much under the tyranny of pride, passion, sensuality, envy, and malice, as any of the vulgar whom they despise for their ignorance. It is well known, to the disgrace of the morality which the world applauds, that some of their most admired sentimental writers and teachers have deserved to be numbered among the most abandoned and despicable of mankind. They have been slaves to the basest and most degrading appetites, and the tenor of their lives has been a marked contradiction to their fine-spun theories. But Jesus Christ effectually teaches his disciples to forsake and abhor whatever is contrary to rectitude or purity; and inspires them with love, power, and a sound mind. And if they do not talk of great things, they are enabled to perform them. Their lives are exemplary and useful, their deaths comfortable, and their memory is precious.

4. The disciples of Jesus are, or may be, always learning. His providence and wisdom have so disposed things, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace, that the whole world around them is as a great school, and the events of every day, with which they are connected, have a tendency and suitableness, if rightly improved, to promote their instruction. Heavenly lessons are taught and illustrated by earthly objects; nor are we capable of understanding them at present, unless the mode of instruction be thus accommodated to our situation and weakness. The scripture (John iii. 12) points out to us a wonderful and beautiful analogy between the outward visible world of nature, and that spiritual state which is called the kingdom of God; the former is like a book written in cypher, to which the scripture is the key, which when we obtain, we have the other opened to us. Thus, wherever they look, some object presents itself, which is adapted, either to lead their thoughts directly to Jesus, or to explain or confirm some passage in his word. So likewise, the incidents of human life; the characters we know, the conversation we hear, the vicissitudes which take place in families, cities, and nations, in a word, the occurrences which furnish the history of every day, afford a perpetual commentary on what the scriptures teach concerning the heart of man and the state of the world, as subject to vanity, and lying in wickedness; and thereby the great truths which it behoves us to understand and remember, are more repeatedly and forcibly exhibited before our eyes, and brought home to our bosoms. It is the peculiar advantage of the disciples of Christ, that their lessons are always before them, and their Master always with them.

5. Men who are otherwise competently qualified for teaching in the branches of science they profess, often discourage and intimidate their scholars, by the impatience, austerity, and distance of their manner. They fail in that condescension and gentleness which are necessary to engage the attention and affection of the timid and the volatile, or gradually to soften and to shame the perverse. Even Moses, though eminent for his forbearance towards the obstinate people committed to his care, and though he loved them, and longed for their welfare, was, at times, almost wearied by them, Numb. xi. 11, 12. But Jesus, who knows before-hand the weakness, the dulness, and the refractoriness of those whom he deigns to teach, to prevent their fears is pleased to say, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." With what meekness did he converse among his disciples, while he was with them upon earth? He allowed them at all times a gracious freedom of access. He bore with their mistakes, reproved and corrected them with the greatest mildness, and taught them as they were able to bear, with a kind accommodation to their prejudices; leading them on step by step, and waiting for the proper season of unfolding to them those more difficult points, which, for a time, appeared to them to be hard sayings. And though he be now exalted upon his glorious throne and clothed with majesty, still his heart is made of tenderness, and his compassions still abound. We are still directed to think of him, not as one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but as exercising the same patience and sympathy towards his disciples now, which so signally marked his

character during his state of humiliation. The compliment of the orator to a Roman emperor, though excessive and absurd when addressed to a sinful worm, that they who durst speak to him were ignorant of his greatness, and they who durst not were equally ignorant of his goodness, is a just and literal truth, if applied to our meek and gracious Saviour. If we duly consider his greatness alone, it seems almost presumption in such creatures as we are, to dare to take his holy name upon our polluted lips; but then, if we have a proportionable sense of his unbounded goodness and grace, every difficulty is overruled, and we feel a liberty of drawing near to him, though with reverence, yet with the confidence of children when they speak to an affectionate parent.

A person may be meek, though in an elevated situation of life; but Jesus was likewise lowly. There was nothing in his external appearance to intimidate the poor and the miserable from coming to him. He was lowly or humble. Custom, which fixes the force and acceptation of words, will not readily allow us to speak of humility as applicable to the great God. Yet it is said, He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth, Psal. cxiii. 6. Humility, in strictness of speech, is an attribute of magnanimity; an indifference to the little distinctions by which weak and vulgar minds are affected. In the view of the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity (Is. lvii. 15), all distinctions that can obtain among creatures vanish; and he humbles himself no less to notice the worship of an angel, than the fall of a sparrow to the ground. But we more usually express this idea by the term condescension. Such was the mind that was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5. It belonged to his dignity, as Lord of all, to look with an equal eye upon all his creatures. None could recommend themselves to him by their rank, wealth, or abilities, the gifts of his own bounty; none were excluded from his regard, by the want of those things which are in estimation among men. And to stain the pride of human glory, he was pleased to assume an humble state. Though he was rich, he made himself poor (2 Cor. viii. 9), for the sake of those whom he came into the world to save. In this respect he teaches us by his example. He took upon him the form of a servant (Phil. ii. 7), a poor and obscure man, to abase our pride, to cure us of selfishness, and to reconcile us to the cross.

The happy effect of his instructions upon those who receive them, is, rest to their souls. This has been spoken to before; but as it is repeated in the text, I shall not entirely pass it over here. He gives rest to our souls,—by restoring us to our proper state of dependence upon God; a state of reconciliation and peace, and deliverance from guilt and fear; a state of subjection; for till our wills are duly subjected to the will of God, we can have no rest—by shewing us the vanity of the world, and thereby putting an end to our wearisome desires and pursuits after things uncertain, frequently unattainable, always unsatisfying—by a communication of sublimer pleasures and hopes than the present state of things can possibly afford—and lastly, by furnishing us with those aids, motives, and encouragements, which make our duty desirable, practicable, and pleasant.

How truly then may it be said, that his yoke is easy, and his burden light! such a burden as wings are to a bird, raising the soul above the low and grovelling attachments to which it was once confined. They only can rightly judge of the value of this rest, who are capable of contrasting it with the distractions and miseries, the remorse and forebodings, of those who live without God in the world.

But we are all, by profession, his scholars. Ought we not seriously to enquire, what we have actually learned from him? Surely the proud, the haughty, the voluptuous, and the worldly, though they have heard of his name, and may have attended on his institutions, have not hitherto sat at his feet, or drank of his Spirit. It requires no long train of examination to determine, whether you have entered into his rest, or not; or, if you have not yet attained it, whether you are seeking it in the ways of his appointment. It is a rest for the soul, it is a spiritual blessing, and therefore does not necessarily depend upon external circumstances. Without this rest, you must be restless and comfortless in a palace. If you have it, you may be, at least comparatively, happy in a dungeon. To-day, if not before to-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice; and while he says to you by his word, "Come unto me, and learn of me," let your hearts answer, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 22.

SERMON XVI.

THE LAMB OF GOD, THE GREAT ATONEMENT.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! JOHN i. 29.

GREAT and marvellous are the works of the Lord God Almighty! We live in the midst of them, and the little impression they make upon us sufficiently proves our depravity. He is great in the very smallest; and there is not a plant, flower, or insect, but bears the signature of infinite wisdom and power. How sensibly then should we be affected by the consideration of the whole, if sin had not

blinded our understandings, and hardened our hearts! In the beginning, when all was dark, unformed, and waste, his powerful word produced light, life, beauty, and order. He commanded the sun to shine, and the planets to roll. The immensity of creation is far beyond the reach of our conceptions. The innumerable stars, the worlds, which, however large in themselves, are, from their remoteness, but barely visible, to us are of little more immediate and known use, than to enlarge our idea of the greatness of their Author. Small, indeed, is the knowledge we have of our own system; but we know enough to render our indifference inexcusable. The glory of the sun must strike every eye; and in this enlightened age, there are few persons but have some ideas of the magnitude of the planets, and the rapidity and regularity of their motions. Farther, the rich variety which adorns this lower creation, the dependence and relation of the several parts and their general subserviency to the accommodation of man, the principal inhabitant, together with the preservation of individuals, and the continuance of every species of animals, are subjects not above the reach of common capacities, and which afford almost endless and infinite scope for reflection and admiration. But the bulk of mankind regard them not. The vicissitudes of day and night, and of the revolving seasons, are to them matters of course, as if they followed each other without either cause or design. And though the philosophers, who professedly attach themselves to the study of the works of nature, are overwhelmed by the traces of a wisdom and arrangement which they are unable to comprehend; yet few of them are led to reverential thoughts of God, by their boasted knowledge of his creatures. Thus men live without God in the world, though they live, and move, and have their being in him, and are incessantly surrounded by the most striking proofs of his presence and energy. Perhaps an earthquake, or a hurricane, by awakening their fears, may force upon their minds a conviction of his power over them and excite an occasional momentary application to him; but when they think the danger over, they relapse into their former stupidity.

What can engage the attention, or soften the obduracy of such creatures? Behold one wonder more, greater than all the former; the last, the highest effect of divine goodness! God has so loved rebellious, ungrateful sinners, as to appoint them a Saviour in the person of his only Son. The prophets foresaw his manifestation in the flesh, and foretold the happy consequences—that his presence would change the wilderness into a fruitful field, that he was coming to give sight to the blind, and life to the dead; to set the captive at liberty; to unloose the heavy burden; and to bless the weary with rest. But this change was not to be wrought merely by a word of power, as when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. i. 3. It was great to speak the world from nothing; but far greater, to redeem sinners from misery. The salvation, of which he is the Author, though free to us, must cost him dear. Before the mercy of God can be actually dispensed to such offenders, the rights of his justice, the demands of his law, and the honour of his government must be provided for. The early institution and long continued use of sacrifices, had clearly pointed out the necessity of an atonement; but the real and proper atonement could only be made by Messiah. The blood of slaughtered animals could not take away sin, nor display the righteousness of God in pardoning it. This was the appointed covenanted work of Messiah, and he alone could perform it. With this view he had said, "Lo, I come," Psal. xl. 7. And it was in this view, when John saw him, that he pointed him out to his disciples, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Three points offer to our consideration:

I. The title here given to Messiah,—The Lamb of God.

II. The efficacy of his sacrifice,—He taketh away sin.

III. The extent of it,—The sin of the world.

I. He is the Lamb of God.—The paschal lamb, and the lambs which were daily offered, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses, were of God's appointment; but this Lamb was likewise of his providing. The others were but types. Though many, they were all insufficient (Heb. x. 10) to cleanse the consciences of the offerers from guilt; and they were all superseded, when Messiah, by the one offering of himself, once for all, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, in favour of all who believe in his name.

This title, therefore, the Lamb of God, refers to his voluntary substitution for sinners, that by his sufferings and death they who deserved to die might obtain eternal life through him, and for his sake. Mankind were universally chargeable with transgression of the law of God, and were in a state of alienation from him. A penalty in case of disobedience was annexed to the law they had broken; to which they, as offenders, were therefore obnoxious. Though it would be presumptuous in such worms as we are, to determine, upon principles of our own, whether the sovereign Judge of the universe could, consistently with his own glory, remit this penalty without satisfaction, or not; yet, since he has favoured us with a revelation of his will upon the point, we may speak more confidently, and affirm, that it was not consistent with his truth and holiness, and the honour of his moral government, to do it, because

this is his own declaration. We may now be assured, that the forgiveness of one sinner, and, indeed, of one sin, by an act of mere mercy, and without any interposing consideration, was incompatible with the inflexibility of the law, and the truth and justice of the Lawgiver. But mercy designed the forgiveness of innumerable sinners, each of them chargeable with innumer ble sins; and the declaration, that God is thus merciful, was to be recorded, and publicly known through a long succession of ages, and to extend to sins not yet committed. An act of grace so general and unreserved, might lead men (not to speak of superior intelligences) to disparaging thoughts of the holiness of God, and might even encourage them to sin with hope of impunity, if not connected with some provision, which might shew that the exercise of his mercy was in full harmony with the honour of all his perfections. How God could be just, and yet justify those (Rom. iii. 26) whom his own righteous constitution condemned, was a difficulty too great for finite understandings to solve. But, herein is God glorious. His wisdom propounded, and his love afforded, the adequate, the only possible expedient. He revealed to our first parents his purpose, which in the fulness of time he accomplished, of sending forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem sinners from the curse of the law (Gal. iv. 4), by sustaining it for them. Considering the dignity of his person and the perfection of his obedience, his sufferings and death for sins not his own, displayed the heinousness of sin, and the severe displeasure of God against it, in a much stronger light than the execution of the sentence upon the offenders could possibly do. It displays likewise the justice of this sentence, since neither the dignity nor the holiness of the surety could exempt him from suffering; and that, though he was the beloved of God, he was not spared. This is what I understand by atonement and satisfaction for sin.

II. The efficacy of this atonement is complete. The Lamb of God, thus slain, taketh away sin, both with respect to its guilt and its defilement. The Israelites, by looking to the brazen serpent (Numb. xxi. 9), were saved from death, and healed of their wounds. The Lamb of God is an object, proposed, not to our bodily sight, but to the eye of the mind, which indeed in fallen man is naturally blind; but the gospel-message, enlivened by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, is appointed to open it. He who thus seeth the Son, and believeth on him (John vi. 40), is delivered from guilt and condemnation, is justified from all sin. He is warranted to plead the sufferings of the Lamb of God in bar of his own; the whole of the Saviour's obedience unto death, as the ground and title of his acceptance unto life. Guilt or obnoxiousness to punishment being removed, the soul has an open way of access to God, and is prepared to receive blessings from him. For as the sun, the fountain of light, fills the eye that was before blind, the instant it receives sight; so God, who is the fountain of goodness, enlightens all his intelligent creatures according to their capacity, unless they are by sin blinded, and rendered incapable of communion with him. The Saviour is now received and enthroned in the heart, and from his fulness the life of grace is derived and maintained. Thus not only the guilt, but the love of sin, and its dominion, are taken away, subdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing pardoned sinner. The blood, which frees him from distress, preserves a remembrance of the great danger and misery from which he has been delivered warm upon his heart, inspires him with gratitude to his Deliverer, and furnishes him with an abiding and constraining motive for cheerful and universal obedience.

III. The designed extent of this gratuitous removal of sin, by the oblation of the Lamb of God, is expressed in a large and indefinite manner: He taketh away the sin of the world. Many of my hearers need not to be told, what fierce and voluminous disputes have been maintained concerning the extent of the death of Christ. I am afraid the advantages of such controversies have not been answerable to the zeal of the disputants. For myself, I wish to be known by no name but that of a christian, and implicitly to adopt no system but the Bible. I usually endeavour to preach to the heart and the conscience, and to wave, as much as I can, all controversial points. But as the subject now lies directly before me, I shall embrace the occasion, and simply and honestly open to you the sentiments of my heart concerning it.

If because the death of Christ is here said to take away the sin of the world, or (as this evangelist expresses it in another place), the whole world (1 John ii. 2), it be inferred, that he actually designed and intended the salvation of all men, such an inference would be contradicted by fact. For it is certain that all men will not be saved, Matth. vii. 13, 14. It is to be feared, that the greater part of those to whom the word of his salvation is sent perish in their sins. If therefore he cannot be disappointed of his purpose, since many do perish, it could not be his fixed design that all men should be finally and absolutely saved.

The exceeding great number, once dead in trespasses and sins, who shall be found on his right hand at the great day of his appearance, are frequently spoken of in appropriate and peculiar language. They are stiled his sheep (John x. 11, 16), for whom he laid down his life; his elect (Mark xiii. 27), his own (John xiii. 1); those to whom it is given to believe

in his name (Phil. i. 29), and concerning whom it was the Father's good pleasure to predestinate them to the adoption of children, Eph. v. 5. By nature they are children of wrath, even as others (Eph. ii. 3), and no more disposed in themselves to receive the truth than those who obstinately and finally reject it. Whenever they become willing, they are made so in a day of divine power (Psal. cx. 3), and wherein they differ, it is grace that makes them to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7. Passages in the scripture to this purpose are innumerable; and though much ingenuity has been employed to soften them, and to make them speak the language of an hypothesis, they are so plain in themselves that he who runs may read. It is not the language of conjecture, but of inspiration, that they whom the Lord God did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, Rom. viii. 29. And though some serious persons perplex themselves with needless and painful reasonings, with respect to the sovereignty of God in his conduct towards mankind, they all, if truly spiritual and enlightened, stand upon this very ground, in their own experience. Many, who seem to differ from us in the way of argumentation, perfectly accord with us, when they simply speak of what God has done for their souls. They know and acknowledge as readily as we, that they were first found of him when they sought him not; and that otherwise they neither should nor could have sought him at all; nor can they give any better reason than this why they are saved out of the world, That it pleased the Lord to make them his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22.

But, on the other hand, I cannot think the sense of the expression is sufficiently explained, by saying, That the world, and the whole world is spoken of, to teach us that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was not confined, like the Levitical offerings, to the nation of Israel only; but that it is available for the sins of a determinate number of persons, called the Elect, who are scattered among many nations, and found under a great variety of states and circumstances in human life. This is undoubtedly the truth, so far as it goes; but not, I apprehend, fully agreeable to the scriptural manner of representation. That there is an election of grace, we are plainly taught; yet it is not said, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the elect, but that he came to save sinners, to seek and to save them that are lost, 1 Tim. i. 15; Luke xix. 10. Upon this ground, I conceive that ministers have a warrant to preach the gospel to every human creature, and to address the conscience of every man in the sight of God; and that every person who hears this gospel has thereby a warrant, an encouragement, yea, a command, to apply to Jesus Christ for salvation. And that they who refuse, thereby exclude themselves, and perish, not because they never had, nor possibly could have any interest in his atonement, but simply because they will not come unto him that they may have life. I know something of the cavils and curious reasonings which obtain upon this subject, and I know I may be pressed with difficulties, which I cannot resolve to the full satisfaction of enquiring and speculative spirits. I am not disheartened by meeting with some things beyond the grasp of my scanty powers, in a book which I believe to be inspired by him, whose ways and thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, Isa. lv. 8. 9. But I believe, that vain reasonings, self-will, an attachment to names and parties, and a disposition to draw our sentiments from human systems, rather than to form them by a close and humble study of the Bible, with prayer for divine teaching, are the chief sources of our perplexities and disputes.

The extent of the atonement is frequently represented, as if a calculation had been made, how much suffering was necessary for the surety to endure, in order exactly to expiate the aggregate number of all the sins of all the elect; that so much he suffered precisely, and no more; and that when this requisition was completely answered, he said, It is finished, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, John xix. 30. But this nicety of computation does not seem analogous to that unbounded magnificence and grandeur which overwhelm the attentive mind in the contemplation of the divine conduct in the natural world. When God waters the earth, he waters it abundantly, Psal. lxv. 10. He does not restrain the rain to cultivated or improvable spots, but with a profusion of bounty worthy of himself his clouds pour down water with equal abundance upon the barren mountain, the lonely desert, and the pathless ocean. Why may we not say with the scriptures, that Christ died to declare the righteousness of God (Rom. iii. 25, 26), to manifest that he is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus? And for any thing we know to the contrary, the very same display of the evil and demerit of sin, by the Redeemer's agonies and death, might have been equally necessary, though the number of the elect were much smaller than it will appear to be when they shall all meet before the throne of glory. If God had formed this earth for the residence of one man only; had it been his pleasure to afford him the same kind and degree of light which we enjoy, the same glorious sun, which is now sufficient to enlighten and comfort the millions of mankind, would have been necessary for the accommodation of that one person. So, perhaps, had it been his pleasure to save but one sinner, in a way that should give the highest possible discovery of his justice and of his mercy, this could

have been done by no other method than that which he has chosen for the salvation of the innumerable multitudes who will in the great day unite in the song of praise to the Lamb who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. As the sun has a sufficiency of light for eyes (if there were so many capable of beholding it) equal in number to the leaves upon the trees, and the blades of grass that grow upon the earth; so in Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, there is plenteous redemption, he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him (Psal. cxxx. 7; Rom. x. 12); and he invites sinners, without exception, to whom the word of his salvation is sent, even to the ends of the earth, to look unto him, that they may be saved, Isa. xiv. 22.

Under the gospel-dispensation, and by it, God commands all men, everywhere, to repent, Acts xvii. 30. All men, therefore, everywhere, are encouraged to hope for forgiveness, according to the constitution prescribed by the gospel; otherwise repentance would be both impracticable and unavailing. And therefore the command to repent implies a warrant to believe in the name of Jesus as taking away the sin of the world. Let it not be said, that to call upon men to believe, which is an act beyond their natural power, is to mock them. There are prescribed means for the obtaining of faith, which it is not beyond their natural power to comply with, if they are not wilfully obstinate. We have the word of God for our authority. God cannot be mocked (Gal. vi. 7), neither doth he mock his creatures. Our Lord did not mock the young ruler, when he told him that if he would sell his possessions upon earth, and follow him, he should have treasure in heaven, Luke xviii. 22. Had this ruler no power to sell his possessions? I doubt not but that he himself thought he had power to sell them if he pleased. But while he loved his money better than he loved Christ, and preferred earthly treasures to heavenly, he had no will to part with them. And a want of will in a moral agent is a want of power in the strongest sense. Let none presume to offer such excuses to their Maker as they would not accept in their own concerns. If you say of a man, he is such a liar that he cannot speak a word of truth; so profane that he cannot speak without an oath; so dishonest that he cannot omit one opportunity of cheating or stealing; do you speak of this disability to good, as an extenuation, and because you think it renders him free from blame? Surely you think the more he is disinclined to good, and habituated to evil, the worse he is. A man that can speak lies and perjury, that can deceive and rob, but is such an enemy to truth and goodness that he can do nothing that is kind or upright, must be a shocking character indeed! Judge not more favourably of yourself if you can love the world and sensual pleasure, but cannot love God; if you can fear a worm like yourself, but live without the fear of God; if you can boldly trample upon his laws, but will not, and therefore cannot humble yourself before him, and seek his mercy, in the way of his appointment.

We cannot ascribe too much to the grace of God; but we should be careful, that under a semblance of exalting his grace, we do not furnish the slothful and unfaithful (Matth. xxv. 16) with excuses for their wilfulness and wickedness. God is gracious; but let man be justly responsible for his own evil, and not presume to state his case so, as would, by just consequence, represent the holy God as being the cause of the sin, which he hates and forbids.

The whole may be summed up in two points, which I commend to your serious attention; which it must be the business of my life to enforce; and which, I trust, I shall not repent of having enforced, either at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, when I must give an account of my preaching, and you of what you have heard in this place:

1. That salvation is, indeed, wholly of grace The gift of a Saviour, the first dawn of light into the heart, all the supports and supplies needful for carrying on the work from the foundation to the top-stone, all is of free grace.

2. That now the Lamb of God is preached to you, as taking away the sin of the world, if you reject him (which may the Lord forbid!), I say, if you reject him, your blood will be upon your own head. You are warned, you are invited. Dare not to say, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? Rom. ix. 19. If he will save me, I shall be saved; if not, what can I do? God is merciful, but he is also holy and just; he is almighty, but his infinite power is combined with wisdom, and regulated by the great designs of his government. He can do innumerable things which he will not do. What he will do (so far as we are concerned) his word informs us, and not one jot or tittle thereof shall fail, Matth. v. 18.

Dec 14 1775

SERMON XVII.

MESSIAH DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Isaiah liii 3.

The heathen moralists, ignorant of the character and perfections of God, the true dignity and immortality of the soul, and the root and extent of human depravity, had no better foundation for what they called virtue than pride; no higher aim in their regulations, than the interests of society and the conduct

of civil life. They expressed, indeed, occasionally, some sentiments of a superior kind; but these, however just and valuable upon the principles of revelation, were delusive and impracticable upon their own. And Brutus, one of the most admired characters of antiquity, confessed, just before he put an end to his own life, that having long been enamoured of virtue as a real good, he found it, at last, to be but an empty name. But though they had so little satisfaction, or success, in the pursuit of virtue, they were so pleased with the idea they formed of it, as generally to suppose, that if virtue should become visible, it would necessarily engage the esteem and admiration of mankind.

There was, however, one remarkable exception to this opinion. The wisdom of Socrates seems to have been, in many respects, different from that of the bulk of their philosophers. Socrates having expressed his idea of a perfect character, a truly virtuous man, ventured to predict the reception such a person, if such a one could ever be found, would meet with from the world. And he thought, that his practice would be so dissimilar to that of other men, his testimony against their wickedness so strong, and his endeavours to reform them so importunate and unwelcome, that instead of being universally admired, he would be disliked and hated; that mankind were too degenerate and too obstinate, to bear either the example or the reproof of such a person, and would most probably revile and persecute him, and put him to death as an enemy to their peace.

In this instance, the judgment of Socrates accords with the language of the Old, and with the history of the New Testament. Messiah was this perfect character. As such Isaiah describes him. He likewise foresaw how he would be treated, and foretold that he would be numbered with transgressors, despised and rejected, by the very people who were eye-witnesses of his upright and benevolent conduct. And thus, in fact, it proved. When Jesus was upon earth, true virtue and goodness were visibly displayed, and thereby the wickedness of man became signally conspicuous For they among whom he was conversant, preferred a robber and a murderer to him, John. xviii. 40. They preserved Barabbas, who had been justly doomed to die for enormous crimes, and they nailed Jesus, in his stead, to the cross.

When Messiah appeared, the Jews professed to blame the wickedness of their forefathers, who had opposed and slain the prophets. If they regretted the ill-treatment the servants of God had formerly received, might it not be hoped that they would reverence his Son? (Matt. xxi. 47.) concerning whom, under his character of Messiah, their expectations were raised by the scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day.

But he was despised and rejected of men. Angels sung praises at his birth, but men despised him. He took not upon him the nature of angels, but of man; yet men rejected him. Sinful, helpless men rejected and despised the only Saviour. He came to his own, but his own received him not. How lamentable and fatal was their obstinacy! Pretended Messiahs were eagerly regarded and followed by them (John v. 43.), but the true Messiah was despised and rejected of men!

Let us consider the clauses of the text separately, in the order in which we read them.

I. He was despised and rejected of men.—It would be a great mistake to imagine that the Jews were the only people capable of this ingratitude and obstinacy. If any person here thinks, surely I would not have despised him, had I seen his wonderful works, and heard him speak as never man spake: possibly that thought may prove you to be of the very same spirit with those who, while they thirsted for his blood, ignorantly presumed, that if they had lived in the days of their forefathers, they would not have joined with them in persecuting the prophets, Matth. xxiii. 31. The prejudices which operated so strongly against our Lord's mission and ministry, were not peculiar to the people of one age or country, but such as are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man. The same principles which influenced the Jews to oppose and despise his person, still influence multitudes to slight and oppose the doctrine which he taught, and which he commanded his disciples to preach and perpetuate to the end of the world. In proof of this, it will be sufficient to assign some of the principal causes of the contempt and hatred which he met with from the men of that generation.

1. They despised him for what they accounted the meanness of his appearance. Though rich in himself, he became poor for our sakes, and his poverty made him contemptible in their eyes. They expected Messiah would appear with external pomp and power. But when they saw him, they scorned him, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Matth. xiii. 55. He who had not money to pay the tribute demanded of him (Matth. xvii. 27.), nor a house wherein to lay his head, was of small esteem with those who were covetous, proud of worldly distinctions, and fond of the praise and admiration of men.

2. Their contempt was heightened, when this poor man publicly asserted his proper character and claim, demanded their attention and homage, and styled himself in a peculiar sense the Son of God, the resurrection and the life, John v. 18; xi. 25. For this seeming inconsistence between the appearance he made and the honours he assumed, they treated him as a de

moniac and a madman, John x. 20. Their language strongly expressed their sentiments of him, when they asked him with disdain, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Whom makest thou thyself?" John viii. 53.

3. They objected to him the low state and former characters of his followers. Some of them were of low rank in life. The most of those who constantly attended him were poor fishermen. Others had been of bad repute, publicans, and open sinners. For this they reproached him, and thought they were fully justified in their contempt, while they could say, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" John vii. 48.

4. They were farther exasperated against him, by the authority and severity with which he taught. It is true, he was gentle and meek to all who felt their need of his help, or sincerely desired his instruction. He received them without exception, and treated them with the greatest tenderness. But he vindicated the honour of the law of God, from the corrupt doctrine and tradition of their professed teachers. He exposed and unmasked the hypocrisy of their most admired characters, and compared the men who were in the highest reputation for wisdom and sanctity, to whited sepulchres, warning the people against them as blind guides and deceivers.

5. These blind guides strengthened the prejudices of their blind followers against him, by misrepresentation. They attempted to avail themselves of the scripture, when they thought it would answer their purpose. They eagerly made the most of a prevailing mistake, that Jesus was born in Galilee, because he was brought up in Nazareth from his infancy. This they urged as a proof that he could not be Messiah, who the prophets had declared was to be born at Bethlehem in Judea. When he healed diseases on the sabbath-day, they represented the effects of his compassion as a breach of that strict observance of the Sabbath which was enjoined by the law of Moses, and that therefore he could not be of God, John ix. 16. And when they were not able to deny the reality of his wonderful works, they ascribed them to the ageney of Satan, Matth. xii. 24. We, at this distance of time, can easily perceive the folly and madness of their attempts. But the Scribes and Pharisees were the public authorized doctors and teachers of the people, and were supported by the ecclesiastical and civil power; or, as we should now express it, by church and state. The people were not apt to suspect their leaders, whom they thought wiser and better than themselves; or, if sometimes they hesitated, were impressed by the majesty of his words, or the evidence of his miraculous works, and constrained to say, "Is not this the son of David?" (Mat. xii. 23) they were soon intimidated and silenced by canons and laws; for it was carefully enacted, in order to keep them in subjection, that whoever acknowledged him should be put out of the synagogues (John ix. 22; xii. 48); that is, according to our modern language, excommunicated. This among the Jews, as it has often since been among Christians, was a punishment which drew after it terrible consequences. A man must be in good earnest, or rather taught and supported by the grace of God, who could resist such arguments as these.

These things are easily applicable to the church-history of succeeding times. The gospel of Christ has often been, and is to this day, rejected and despised upon similar grounds. Its simplicity and plainness, and the manner of its proposal, adapted to the use and capacity of the vulgar, offend those who are wise in their own conceit, and proud of their understanding and taste. At the same time they are equally disgusted by the sublimity of its doctrines, which will not submit to the test of their vain reasonings, and can only be received by humble faith. The faithfulness and freedom which its ministers are enjoined to use, give great offence likewise. And because they cannot comply with the humours of those who wish them to prophesy smooth things and deceits, they are accounted censorious, uncharitable, and disturbers of the public peace. Again, the dislike and opposition it frequently meets with from persons of great titles and high stations, deter multitudes from pursuing those inquiries, which some conviction of the truth would prompt them to, were they not discouraged by the fear of consequences. How often has a dread of the displeasure of doctors, bishops, universities, councils, and popes, or an ignorant, slavish deference to their judgment or decisions, prevented people from following that light which had begun to force itself upon their consciences? How few among those of reputation for wisdom and learning, how few of the great and opulent, have encouraged or espoused the doctrine of the cross? It is, therefore, more properly a subject for lamentation than for wonder, that this way is despised, and almost everywhere spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22. Farther, as the bulk of those who embrace it are of low condition, so many of them are as free to confess to the praise of the grace of God, as others can be to urge it to their reproach, that till they knew and received this despised gospel, their characters and practices were vile. Lastly, what unhappy subtilty has been employed, in a way of reason and argument, with an appeal to detached and perverted passages of scripture, to misrepresent the work of the Holy Spirit, as folly, hypocrisy, or enthusiasm, and even to charge the gospel itself with giving encouragement to a licentious conduct! In short, the spirit of the world, the arts and influence of designing men, are so powerful, that what our Lord said in Judea holds equally true in christendom, "Blessed is he who is not offended in me!" Matth. xi. 6.

I have reserved to a distinct paragraph the mention of one cause why the gospel is frequently despised and reproached. Because, though it be no less unjust and unreasonable than those which I have recited, it is more immediately incumbent upon all who name the name of Christ, to prevent it as much as possible; I mean, the scandal which arises from the miscarriages of those who profess it. Offences of this kind must come, but woe to them by whom they come. Matth. xviii. 7. There were pretended Christians, even in the apostles times, who were enemies to the cross of Christ (Phil. iii. 18), and by their evil conduct, caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of; and therefore, we cannot be surprised that there are such persons now. But you that love the Lord, hate evil, Psal. xcvii. 10. There are many who watch for your halting, and are ready to say, There! there so we would have it. It would be in vain for ministers to declare that the doctrines of grace are doctrines according to godliness, unless our testimony is supported by the tempers and conduct of our people: the world will probably judge, rather by what they see in you, than by what they hear from us. Nor will it suffice that they cannot say you are an adulterer, a drunkard, a miser, or a cheat. If you espouse our doctrine, they will expect you to be humble, meek, patient, and benevolent; to find integrity in all your dealings, and a punctual discharge of your duty in every branch of relative life. What must the world think of our principles, if they who avow them are fretful, envious, censorious, discontented, slothful, or unfaithful; or if they are niggardly and hard-hearted, or voluptuous and dissolute, or implacable and revengeful! they who thus lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, and confirm the prejudices of the ignorant, will have much to answer for.

II. It is further said, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.—He was surrounded with sorrows on every side, and grief was his intimate, inseparable companion. Surely this consideration, if any, will animate us to endure the cross, and to despise the shame we may be exposed to for his sake. The illustration of this subject will offer more fully in the sequel. It shall suffice, at present, to assign three causes for his continual sorrows.

1. The outward course of life, to which he submitted, for the sake of sinners, exposed him to want, weariness, contempt, and opposition. And though his resignation and patience were perfect, yet he was truly a man, and partaker of our nature, with all its affections and sensibilities which do not imply sin. His feelings, therefore, were human, similar to our own in similar circumstances, and they were often painfully exercised. Once and again we read that he was hungry and had no food; he was thirsty (Matth. iv. 9; xxi. 18; John iv. 2), and was nearly refused a little water to drink, when wearied with his journeying in the heat of the day. His character was aspersed, his person despised, his words insidiously wrested, and his actions misrepresented. He was misunderstood even by his friends, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by the rest, John vii. 5. It is hardly possible for his followers to meet with any outward trial, which may not remind them of some part of the history of their Lord and Master, who left them an example of suffering, that they should cheerfully follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21.

2. His perfect knowledge and foresight of those sufferings which we emphatically call his Passion. How often does he speak of them, and describe the circumstances as if they were actually present? Futurity, is, in mercy, concealed from us. It would often bereave us of all present comfort, if we knew what the next year, or, perhaps, what the next day would bring forth. If some of you could have foreseen, many years ago, what you have since been brought through, you would probably have sunk under the apprehension; or the stoutest of us might sink now, if we were certainly to know what may be yet before us. But Jesus, long before he made atonement for our sins, had counted the cost. And though his love determined him to save us, the prospect, which was continually present to his view, of the approaching unutterable agonies of his soul, of all that he must endure from God, from the powers of darkness, and from wicked men, when he should be made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal. iii. 13.); I say, this tremendous prospect was, doubtless, a perpetual source of sorrow.

3. The frame of his spirit. Whoever has a measure of the mind that was in Christ, must be proportionally burdened and grieved, like righteous Lot in Sodom (2 Pet. ii. 8), with the wickedness around him, if he lives in society. Who that has any regard for the honour of God, or the souls of men, can hear and see what passes every hour; how the authority of God is affronted, his goodness abused, and his mercy despised, without emotions of grief and compassion? If we are spiritually-minded, we must be thus affected; and we should be more so, if we were more spiritual. But the holiness of Messiah, and, consequently, his hatred of sin, was absolutely perfect. His view of the guilt and misery of sinners, was likewise comprehensive and clear. How must he be therefore grieved by the wickedness and insensibility of those with whom he daily conversed! especially as he not only observed the outward conduct of men, but had an intimate knowledge of the evil heart, which is hidden from us. In this sense his sufferings and sorrows began with his early years, and continued throughout the whole of

his life. He undoubtedly could say, with an emphasis peculiar to himself, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; rivers of waters run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law." Psal. cxix. 156, 158.

We call ourselves the followers and servants of him, who was despised of men, and encompassed with sorrows. And shall we then seek great things for ourselves (Jer. xlv. 5), as if we belonged to the present world, and expected no portion beyond it? Or shall we be tremblingly alive to the opinion of our fellow-creatures, and think it a great hardship, if it be our lot to suffer shame for his sake, who endured the cross, and despised the shame for us? Rather may we account such disgrace our glory, and every loss and suffering, that we may endure for him, a gain; while on the other hand we learn, with the apostle Paul, to esteem every gain and honour this world can afford, to be but loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, Phil. iii. 8.

SERMON XVIII.

VOLUNTARY SUFFERING.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. ISAIAH, l. 6.

THAT which often passes amongst men for resolution, and the proof of a noble, courageous spirit, is, in reality, the effect and mark of a weak and little mind. At least, it is chiefly owing to the presence of certain circumstances, which have a greater influence upon the conduct than any inherent principle. Thus, many persons who appear to set death and danger at defiance in the hour of battle, while they are animated by the examples of those around them, and instigated by a fear of the punishment or shame they would incur if they deserted their post; upon a change of situation, as, for instance, on a bed of sickness, discover no traces of the heroism for which they were before applauded, but tremble at the leisurely approach of death, though they were thought to despise it under a different form. It was not true fortitude, it was rather a contemptible pusillanimity, that determined the celebrated Cato to destroy himself. He was afraid of Cæsar; his dread of him, after his victories, was so great, that he durst not look him in the face; and therefore he killed himself to avoid him. To the same meanness of sentiment we may confidently ascribe the pretended gallantry of modern duellists. They fight, not because they are not afraid of death, but because they are impelled by another fear, which makes a greater impression upon a feeble, irresolute mind. They live upon the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and feel themselves too weak to bear the contempt they should meet with from the circle of their acquaintance, if they should decline acting upon the false principles of honour which pride and folly have established. They have not resolution sufficient to act the part which conscience and reason would dictate, and therefore hazard life, and every thing that is dear to them as men, rather than dare to withstand the prevalence of an absurd and brutal custom.

A patient enduring of affliction, and especially of disgrace and contempt, to which the characters the world most admire are confessedly unequal, is a much surer proof of true fortitude, than any of those actions which the love of praise, the fear of man, or even a mercenary attachment to lucre, are capable of producing. True magnanimity is evidenced by the real importance of the end it proposes, and by the steadiness with which it pursues the proper means of attaining that end; undisturbed and unwearied by difficulty, danger, or pain, and equally indifferent to the censure or scorn of incompetent judges. This greatness of mind is essential and peculiar to the character of the christian, I mean the christian who deserves the name. His ends are great and sublime, to glorify God, to obtain nearer communion with him, and to advance in conformity to his holy will. To attain these ends, he employs the means prescribed by the Lord, he waits at Wisdom's gates (Prov. viii. 34), and walks in the paths of dependence and obedience. He therefore cannot conform to the prevailing maxims and pursuits of the many, and is liable to be hated and scorned for his singularity. But he neither courts the smiles of men, nor shrinks at the thought of their displeasure. He loves his fellow-creatures, and is ready to do them every kind office in his power; but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord God.

But this life the christian lives by faith in the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20. Jesus is the source of his wisdom and strength. He likewise is his exemplar. He is crucified to the world by the cross of Christ; and a principal reason of his indifference to the opinion of the world, is the consideration of the manner in which his Lord was treated by it. He is the follower of him who said, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

We may observe, from the words, that the humiliation of Messiah was *voluntary*, and that it was *extreme*.

I. With respect to his engagement, as the Mediator between God and sinners, a great work was given him to do, and he became responsible; and therefore, in this sense, bound, and under obligation. But his compli

ance was likewise voluntary; for he gave himself up freely to suffer, the just for the unjust. Could he have relinquished our cause, and left us to the deserved consequence of our sins, in the trying hour when his enemies seized upon him, legions of angels (Matth. xxvi. 53), had they been wanted, would have appeared for his rescue. But if he was determined to save others, then his own sufferings were unavoidable. Men, in the prosecution of their designs, often meet with unexpected difficulties in their way, which, though they encounter with some cheerfulness, in hope of surmounting them, and carrying their point at last, are considered as impediments; but the sufferings of Messiah were essentially necessary to the accomplishment of his great designs, precisely determined, and present to his view beforehand, so that (as I lately observed) there was not a single circumstance that happened to him unawares. He knew that no blood but his own could make atonement for sin, that nothing less than his humiliation could expiate our pride; that if he did not thus suffer, sinners must inevitably perish; and therefore (such was his love!) he cheerfully and voluntarily gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Two designs of vast importance filled his mind; the completion of them was that joy set before him, for the sake of which he made himself of no reputation endured the cross, and despised the shame. These were, the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners.

1. The highest end of his mediation was to display the glory of the divine character in the strongest light, to afford to all intelligent creatures (Eph. iii. 10), the brightest manifestation they are capable of receiving, of the manifold wisdom of God, his holiness, justice, truth, and love, the stability and excellence of his moral government, all mutually illustrating each other, as combined and shining forth in his person, and in his mediatorial work. Much of the glory of God may be seen, by an enlightened eye, in creation, much in his providential rule and care over his creatures; but the brightness of his glory (John i. 18), the express and full discovery of his perfections, can only be known by Jesus Christ, and the revelation which God has given of himself to the world by him. And, accordingly, we are assured, that the angels, whose knowledge of the natural world is doubtless vastly superior to ours, desire to look into these things; and that the manifold wisdom of God is supereminently made known to principalities and powers, in heaven, by the dispensation of his grace to the church redeemed from the earth.

2. Subordinate to this great design, closely connected with it, and the principal effect for which it will be admired and magnified to eternity, is the complete and everlasting salvation of that multitude of miserable sinners, who, according to the purpose of God, and by the working of his mighty power, shall believe in this Saviour; and who, renouncing every other hope, shall put their trust in him, upon the warrant of the promise and command of God, and yield themselves to be his willing and devoted people. Many are their tribulations in the present life, but they shall be delivered out of them all; they shall overcome, they shall be more than conquerors, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony (Rev. xii. 11); and then they shall shine, like the sun, in the kingdom of heaven. The consummation of their happiness, is a branch of the joy which was set before him. For their sakes, that they might be happy, that he may be admired in them, and by them, to the glory of God, who is all in all, he voluntarily substituted himself to sufferings and death. He endured the cross, and he despised the shame. He gave his back to the smiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, he hid not his face from shame and spitting.

II. But are we reading a prophecy, or the history of his extreme humiliation? It is a prophecy; how literally and exactly it was fulfilled, we learn from his history by the evangelists. With what cruelty, with what contempt was he treated, first by the servants in the hall of the High Priest, afterwards by the Roman soldiers! Let us consider him, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, Heb. xii. 3. These words of the apostle suggest some preliminary observations, to prepare our minds for receiving a due impression from the several particulars here mentioned.

When the apostle would dispose believers by an argument or motive (which, if we fully understood it, would render all other arguments unnecessary) to endure sufferings and crosses patiently, he says "Consider him"—he uses a word which is properly a mathematical term, denoting the ratio or proportion, between different numbers or figures; *q. d.* "Compare yourselves with him, and his sufferings with your own. Consider who he is, no less than what he endured."

In the apprehensions of men, insults are aggravated in proportion to the disparity between the person who receives, and who offers them. A blow from an equal is an offence, but would be still more deeply resented from an inferior. But if a subject, a servant, a slave, should presume to strike a king, it would justly be deemed an enormous crime. But Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom all the angels of God worship, made himself so entirely of no reputation, that the basest of the people, the servants, the common soldiers, were not afraid to make him the object of their derision, and to express their hatred in the most sarcastic and contemptuous manner. It is said, that he endured the contradiction of sinners. So, perhaps, do we

but we are sinners likewise, and deserve much more than we suffer, if not immediately from the instruments of our grief, yet from the Lord, who has a right to employ what instruments he pleases to afflict us for our sins. This thought quieted the spirit of David, when his own son rose up against his life, and his own servant cursed him to his face, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled, he had done nothing amiss; yet the usage he met with was such as has seldom been offered to the vilest malefactor. Their cruel and scornful contradiction was likewise expressly and directly against himself; whereas his people only suffer from unreasonable and wicked men, for his sake, and for their professed attachment to him. In the most violent persecutions, they who could be prevailed on to renounce his name and his cause usually escaped punishment, and were frequently favoured and rewarded. And this is still the ground of the world's displeasure; fierce and bitter as their opposition may seem, the way to reconciliation is always open; they are not angry with us farther than we avow a dependence upon him, and shew ourselves determined to obey him rather than men. If we could forsake him, their resentment would be disarmed, for they mean no more than to intimidate us from his service. I do not think that they who make peace with the world upon these terms, are esteemed by them for their compliance, but they are seldom disturbed any longer. It is plain, therefore, that if we suffer as christians, it is for his sake. He likewise suffered for our sakes; but how wide is the difference between him and us? We, when the trial is sharp, are in danger of flinching from the cause of our best Friend and benefactor, to whom our obligations are so innumerable, and so immense; whereas he gave himself up to endure such things for us, when we were strangers and enemies! He was not only treated with cruelty, but with every mark of the utmost detestation and scorn, which wanton, unfeeling, unrestrained barbarity could suggest.

1. They began to spit upon him in the High Priest's hall. The Roman soldiers likewise did spit upon him, when they had contemptuously arrayed him in a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him, in mockery of his title of King. Great as an insult of this kind would be deemed amongst us, it was considered as still greater, according to the customs prevalent in eastern countries. There, to spit, even in the presence of a person, though it were only upon the ground, conveyed the idea of disdain and abhorrence. But the lowest of the people spit in the face of the Son of God. No comparison can fully illustrate this indignity. There is some proportion between the greatest earthly monarch and the most abject slave. They did not spit upon Alexander, or Cæsar, but upon the Lord of glory

2. They buffeted and beat him on the face, and when he meekly offered his cheek to their blows, they plucked off the hair. The beard was in those times accounted honourable: and when David's servants were shaved by the command of Hanun (2 Sam. x. 5), they were ashamed to be seen. But Jesus was not shaven. With savage violence they tore off the hair of his beard; while he, like a sheep before the shearers, was dumb, and quietly yielded himself to their outrages.

3. His back they tore with scourges, as was foretold by the psalmist: "The plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows," Psal. cxxix. 3. The Jewish council condemned him to death for blasphemy, because he said he was the son of God. Stoning was the punishment prescribed by the law of Moses, in such cases, Lev. xiv. 16. But this death was not sufficiently lingering and tormenting to gratify their malice. To glut their insatiable cruelty, they were therefore willing to own their subjection to the Roman power to be so absolute, that it was not lawful for them to put any one to death (John xvii. 31), according to their own judicial law; and thus wilfully, though unwittingly, they fulfilled the prophecies. They preferred the punishment which the Romans appropriated to slaves who were guilty of flagitious crimes, and therefore insisted that he should be crucified. According to the Roman custom, those who were crucified were previously scourged. Thus, when they had mocked him, and made him their sport, by putting a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a sceptre, in derision of his kingly office, he was stripped and scourged. It was not unfrequent for the sufferers to expire under the severity and torture of scourging. And we may be certain that Jesus experienced no lenity from their merciless hands. The plowers plowed his back. But more and greater tortures were before him. He was engaged to make a full atonement for sin by his sufferings; and as he had power over his own life, he would not dismiss his spirit, till he could say, "It is finished."

And now, to use the words of Pilate, "Behold the man!" John xix. 5. Oh! for a realizing impression of this his extreme humiliation and suffering, that we may be duly affected with a sense of his love to sinners, and of the evil of our sins, which rendered it necessary that the surety should thus suffer! Behold the Lamb of God, mocked, blindfolded, spit upon, and scourged! Let us add to all this the consideration of his praying for his tormentors (Luke xxiii. 34), and we have an example of perfect magnanimity.

Shall we then refuse to suffer shame for his sake, and be intimidated by the frowns or contempt of men, from avowing our attachment to him! Ah! Lord, we are, indeed, capable of this baseness and ingratitude. But

if thou art pleased to strengthen us with the power of thy Spirit, we will account such disgrace our glory. Then we will not hang down our heads and despond, but will rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, if the world revile us, and persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us, provided it be falsely (Matth. v. 11), and provided it be for thy sake!

Shall we continue in sin (Rom. vi. 1.) after we know what it cost him to expiate our sins? God forbid! When Mark Antony addressed the citizens of Rome, to animate them to revenge the death of Cæsar, he enlarged upon Cæsar's character, his great actions, his love to the Roman people, and the evidence he had given of it, in the donations and bequests he had appointed them by his will, the particulars of which he specified. When he had thus engaged their admiration and gratitude, and they discovered emotions of regret and sensibility, that Cæsar, the greatest character in Rome, who had fought and triumphed for them, and had remembered them in his will, should be slain, Antony threw aside a cloth, and shewed them his dead body covered with wounds and blood. This sight rendered it needless to say more. The whole assembly united as one man, to search out, and to destroy his murderers. The application is obvious.—May our hearts, from this hour, be filled with a determined, invariable resentment against sin, the procuring cause of the humiliation and death of our best Friend and benefactor!

SERMON XIX.

MESSIAH SUFFERING AND WOUNDED FOR US.

Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows.—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. ISAIAH, liii. 4, 5.

WHEN our Lord was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and conversed with him. Had we been informed of the interview only, we should prob: bly have desired to know the subject of their conversation, as we might reasonably suppose it turned upon very interesting and important topics. The scripture makes little provision for the indulgence of our curiosity, but omits nothing that is necessary for our instruction; and we learn thus much from it, that they discoursed, not upon the trifling things which the world accounts great, such as the rise and fall of empires; but they spake of the sufferings of Jesus, and of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, Luke ix. 31 They spake of his Exodus (as the Greek word is), his departure out of this life, the issue and completion of his engagement for sinners; that is, his crucifixion and death. This is the grand theme of heaven and heaven-born souls. We lately considered the cruel insults Messiah submitted to, from the servants in the High Priest's hall, and from the Roman soldiers. The passage I have now read leads our meditations to the foot of the cross. May the Holy Spirit realize the scene to our hearts! The cross of Christ displays the divine perfections with peculiar glory. Here the name of God is revealed, as a just God and a Saviour. Here the believer contemplates in one view, the unspeakable evil of sin, and the unsearchable riches of mercy. This gives him the most affecting sense of the misery which he has deserved, while at the same time he receives the fullest assurance that there is forgiveness with God, and discovers a sure foundation whereon he may build his hope of eternal life, without fear of disappointment. From the moment the apostle Paul was enlightened to understand this mystery of redeeming love, he accounted his former gain but loss; his former supposed wisdom no better than folly; and became determined to know nothing (1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14), to depend upon nothing to glory in nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

A representation of the Redeemer's sufferings, capable of exciting tears and moving the passions, may be made by the powers of oratory; and similar emotions have often been produced by a romance or a tragedy, though the subject is known beforehand to be entirely a fiction. But light in the understanding is necessary to convince and influence the heart. Unless the mind be deeply penetrated with the causes which rendered Messiah's death necessary, the most pathetic description of the fact will leave the will and affections unchanged. I hope many of my auditory can assign these causes. You have felt yourselves personally concerned in an event which took place long before your birth; and if you are asked, Why was Jesus mocked, buffeted, and spit upon? and why were his enemies permitted to nail him to the cross? You can answer, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,"—and you can likewise say, "By his stripes we are healed."

The words lead us to consider the *cause* and the *effect*.

I. The cause of the Redeemer's sufferings, implied in the word *our*. He bore the griefs and sorrows which were our desert. Such is the language, the confession, the grateful acknowledgment of all who believe in his name. They who are delivered by grace from the spirit and power of this evil world, and who live by his death, and likewise they who see they must perish unless saved by him, are authorized to consider him as mindful of them,

and making provision for them in the day of his trouble. They who were actually healed by looking at the brazen serpent, according to God's appointment, had a sufficient proof in themselves, that it was erected and placed in view of the camp (Numr. xxi. 9.) on their account. He bore our griefs.—It does not follow that sinners must have been crucified, if the Saviour had not been crucified on their behalf. But as this was a painful and terrible punishment, it may teach us, that without his interposition we were justly liable to extremity of misery in the present life. That we who have offended God should enjoy health, peace, or satisfaction for a single hour; that we do not draw every breath in the most excruciating pain; that we derive any comfort from creatures; that we are not a burden and a terror to ourselves, and mutually to each other; that our state while upon earth, is in any respect, better than an image of hell,—must wholly be ascribed to him. A sinner, as such, is under the curse of the law; and this curse includes every species of misery that can affect us, either in mind, body, or estate. But he was appointed from the beginning, to sustain and exhaust the curse for us. And therefore the earth though so long inhabited by wretches in a state of bold rebellion against their Maker, is filled with the fruits and evidences of his long-suffering patience and mercy. Therefore he still affords us rain and fruitful seasons (Acts xiv. 17), indulges us with a variety of temporal blessings, and gives us power to take comfort in them. This consideration greatly enhances the value of temporal good things to his people. They receive them as from his hand, as tokens of his love and pledges of his favour, sanctified to their use by his blood and promise. Cheered by such thoughts as these, his poor people often enjoy their plain fare with a pleasure, of which the expensive and dissipated sensualist has no conception. And how does it add to the relish of all earthly comforts, to think, while we are using them, that

> There's not a gift his hand bestows,
> But cost his heart a groan!

So, likewise, the remembrance of what he bore for them alleviates the pressure of all their sufferings, and affords them a ground whereon they may rejoice, yea glory, in tribulation also, Rom. v. 3.

But his crucifixion, and the whole of his sufferings from wicked men, cannot give us a just idea of what he endured for us. Grievous as they were, considered in themselves, they were light, if compared with the agonies of his soul. These extorted the blood from his body (Luke xxiii. 44.) before the hand of man touched him. And when he uttered his most dolorous cry upon the cross, it was not for the anguish of his bodily wounds, but his soul felt for a season a separation from the presence and comforts of God. Therefore he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Matth. xxvii. 46. It is true his holy nature was not capable of some part of the impenitent sinner's portion. Remorse of conscience, the stings of the never-dying worm, and the horrors and rage of despair, could not touch him, who had no personal sin, and whose love and faith were always perfect: But a sword pierced his soul: and it pleased the Father not only to permit him to be bruised by the cruelty of his enemies, but to bruise him himself, Is. liii. 10.

The ground of all this was laid in his voluntary substitution of himself from before the foundation of the world, to obey and suffer in behalf of his people. This point will offer more directly from the passage we are next to consider. At present let us briefly notice the expressions before us.

1. He was wounded.—This word which signifies *pierced* or *stabbed*, refers to his crucifixion. This punishment being unknown to the Jews, till they were brought under the Roman power, they had, therefore, no express name for, in their language. Yet it is plainly described by the psalmist, who, speaking, by the spirit of prophecy, in the person of Messiah, says, "They pierced my hands and my feet," Psal. xxii. 16. And it was typified under the law of Moses (Deut. xxi. 23; Gal. iii. 13; 1 Cor. v. 7; John iii. 14), by the curse annexed to hanging upon a tree, which was the nearest death to this; by the paschal lamb, which was roasted; and by the brazen serpent. It was a fit death for a sinner, painful and ignominious. How circumstantial were the prophecies, how apposite the types, how exactly was all fulfilled, and how wonderful was it that the Jews should be led to depart from their own customs and purposes, in order to their accomplishment, though they intended nothing less! But it was the determined counsel and appointment of God (Acts ii. 23), who over-rules all the designs of men, and all that to us appears contingent, to the purposes of his own will and glory.

2. He was bruised.—If we distinguish wounded from bruised, the latter may be referred to the sorrows of his soul, for it is expressly said, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him:" that distress broke his heart, filled him with dismay, caused him to be sore amazed and very heavy, and to say to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Matth. xxvi. 38. No words can be more selected and emphatical, than those which the evangelists use in describing his consternation in the garden of Gethsemane How can this his dejection and terror be accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings and death were a proper atonement of sin; and who suppose, that when he had given to men a perfect rule of life, and commended it to them by his own example, he

died, merely to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to encourage his followers to faithfulness under sufferings! Many of his followers, who were thus witnesses for the truth, and patterns of faithfulness to us, have met death in its most terrible forms with composure, yea, with pleasure, yea, with transports of joy. But is the disciple above his Lord? If christians have triumphed in such circumstances, why did Christ tremble? Not surely because their courage and constancy were greater than his. The causes were entirely different. The martyrs were given up to them who only could kill the body; but Jesus suffered immediately from the hand of God. One stroke of his mighty hand can bruise the spirit of man more sensibly than the united power of all creatures. Jesus died. They that believe in him, are said to sleep in him, 1 Thess. iv. 14. To them death comes disarmed of its sting, wearing a friendly aspect, and bringing a welcome message of dismission from every evil. But the death of Jesus was death indeed, death in all its horrors, the death which sinners had deserved to suffer as transgressors of the law.

3. The chastisement or the punishment of our peace was upon him, that chastisement or punishment on the account of which sinners obtain peace with God.—It properly signifies here, a punishment for instruction or example. Punishments are inflicted, either for the correction of an offender, or for the prevention of evil, or for example to others. The two former reasons could not apply to our Lord. He had committed no evil, he was perfect before, and in suffering. But standing in the place of sinners, and engaged to expiate their offences, he was made a public example of the misery and distress which sin demerited. Thus justice was vindicated in the exercise of mercy, and sinners believing in his name are exempted from punishment, for his sake, in a way which affords not the least encouragement or extenuation to sin. And thus our peace is procured.

II. The effect of his sufferings for sins not his own. He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded and bruised for us, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we may be healed. The Hebrew word here, and the Greek word which the apostle Peter uses in his quotation of this passage (1 Pet. iii. 24), which we render *stripes*, is properly the mark which stripes or wounds leave upon the body, or as we say, scars. The scars in his hands, feet, and side, and perhaps other marks of his many wounds, remained after his resurrection. And John saw him in vision, before the throne, as a lamb that had been slain. All these expressions and representations, I apprehend, are designed to intimate to us, that though the death of Messiah is an event long since past, yet the effects and benefits are ever new, and to the eye of faith are ever present. How admirable is this expedient, that the wounds of one, yea, of millions, should be healed, by beholding the wounds of another! Yet this is the language of the gospel, Look and live. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Three great wounds are ours, guilt, sin, and sorrow; but by contemplating his weals or scars with an enlightened eye, and by rightly understanding who was thus wounded, and why, all these wounds are healed.

You who live by this medicine speak well of it. Tell to others, as you have an opportunity, what a Saviour you have found. It is usual for those who have been relieved, in dangerous and complicated diseases, by a skilful physician, to commend him to others who are labouring under the like maladies. We often see public acknowledgements to this purpose. If all the persons who have felt the efficacy of a dying Saviour's wounds apprehended by faith, were to publish their cases, how greatly would his power and grace be displayed! They are all upon record, and will all be known in the great day of his appearing. Some of them are occasionally published, and may be read in our own tongue. And though they are not all related with equal judgment, nor attended with circumstances equally striking, yet there is a sufficiency, in this way, to leave the world without excuse. Not to mention modern accounts of this kind (though many might be mentioned which are indisputably true, and superior to the cavils of gainsayers), the Confessions of Augustin may be appealed to, as a proof that the gospel is not a system of notions only, but has a mighty power to enlighten the bewildered mind, to subdue the obstinate will, to weaken the force of long confirmed habits of evil, to relieve from distressing fears, and to effect a real, universal, permanent, and beneficial change of sentiment and conduct, such as no similar instance can be found, in the history of mankind, to have been produced by any other principles. But if you are a true christian, in the circle of your connections you will sometimes have a fair opportunity of giving a reason of the hope that is in you. Pray for grace and wisdom to improve such seasons; and if you speak the truth in simplicity and love, you know not but the Lord may give his blessing to your testimony, and honour you as an instrument of good. And to convert one sinner from the error of his way, is an event of greater importance, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

Yet remember, if you espouse this cause, a certain consistency of character will be expected from you, without which you had better be silent, than speak in its defence, or profess yourself a sharer in the privileges of the gospel. There are too many persons who treat the great truths we profess as mere opi-

sions, points of speculation, which form the shibboleth of a party: there are others, who think an attachment to them the sure sign of an enthusiastic deluded imagination: and there are others, again, who misrepresent them as unfavourable to morality, and affording a cloak and an encouragement to licentiousness. Beware, lest, by an improper conduct, you lay stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, strengthen the prejudices of the ignorant, and give weight to the calumnies of the malicious. The people of the world are quick-sighted to the faults of religious professors; and though they affect to despise their principles, they are tolerable judges what that conversation is which only these principles can produce, and always expect it from those who avow them. They will make allowances for others, and admit human infirmity as a plea for their faults, but they will not extend their candour to you. If your zeal for the truth, and your regular attendance upon the ministers who preach it, are not accompanied with a spirit of humility, integrity, and benevolence; if you are passionate, peevish, discontented, censorious, or proud; if they observe that you are greedy of gain, penurious, close-fisted, or hard-hearted; or even if you comply with their customs and spirit, mingle with them in their amusements, and do not maintain a noble singularity by avoiding every appearance of evil; they will not only despise you in their hearts, but they will take the occasion of despising and speaking evil of the truth itself on your account. But if you are all of a piece, and are truly solicitous to adorn your profession, by walking agreeably to the rules of the gospel, and filling up your relations in life to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-creatures; by thus well-doing, you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. ii. 15), and in a great measure stop their mouths, if you cannot change their hearts. And though they may affect to rail at you, or to ridicule you, they will be constrained to feel a secret reverence for you in their consciences.

But are there any hearts of stone amongst us, who are still unaffected by the love and sufferings of the Son of God; who are still crucifying him afresh, and living in sin, though they hear and know what it cost him to make an atonement for sin? Yet now hear —now look—Behold the Lamb of God! The Lord in mercy open the eyes of your mind. I address you once more. I once more conjure you, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his passion, cross and death, to seek to him that your souls may live. Can you be proof against these arguments? Nay, then, should you live and die thus obstinate, you must perish indeed!

SERMON XX.

SIN CHARGED UPON THE SURETY.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. ISAIAH, liii. 6.

COMPARISONS, in the scripture, are frequently to be understood with great limitation: perhaps, out of many circumstances, one only is justly applicable to the case. Thus, when our Lord says, "Behold I come as a thief" (Rev. xvi. 15)—common sense will fix the resemblance to a single point, that he will come suddenly, and unexpected. So when wandering sinners are compared to wandering sheep, we have a striking image of the danger of their state, and of their inability to recover themselves. Sheep wandering without a shepherd, are exposed, a defenceless and easy prey, to wild beasts and enemies, and liable to perish for want of pasture; for they are not able either to provide for themselves, or to find the way back to the place from whence they strayed. Whatever they suffer, they continue to wander, and if not sought out, will be lost. Thus far the allusion holds. But sheep in such a situation are not the subjects of blame. They would be highly blameable, if we could suppose them rational creatures; if they had been under the eye of a careful and provident shepherd, had been capable of knowing him, had wilfully and obstinately renounced his protection and guidance, and voluntarily chosen to plunge themselves into danger, rather than to remain with him any longer. Thus it is with man. His wandering is rebellious. God made him upright, but he has sought out to himself many inventions, Eccl. vii. 29. God has appointed for mankind a safe and pleasant path, by walking in which, they shall find rest to their souls; but they say, We will not walk therein, Jer. vi. 16. They were capable of knowing the consequences of going astray, were repeatedly warned of them, were fenced in by wise and good laws, which they presumptuously broke through. And when they had wandered from him, they were again and again invited to return to him, but they refused. They mocked his messages and his messengers, and preferred the misery they had brought upon themselves, to the happiness of being under his direction and care. Surely he emphatically deserves the name of the Good Shepherd, who freely laid down his life to restore sheep of this character!

My text therefore expresses the sentiment of those, and of those only, who are acquainted with the misery of our fallen state, feel their own concern in it, and approve of the

method which God has provided for their deliverance and recovery. It contains a confession of their own guilt, and an acknowledgment of his mercy.

I. A confession of guilt and wretchedness.—Sin has deprived us both of the knowledge and presence of God. In consequence of this, we wander, every one to his own way. All are under the power of sin, and all equally strangers to the paths of peace and safety. The paths which sinners chuse for themselves are diverse from each other, as inclination or circumstances vary; but however different in appearance, if persisted in, they terminate at last in the same point. They all lead to destruction. We may observe on this head,

1. It is a sufficient proof of our depravity, that we prefer our own ways to the Lord's; nor can he inflict a heavier judgment upon us in this life, than to give us up entirely to the way of our own hearts. He made us to be happy; but as he made us for himself, and gave us a capacity, and a vastness of desire, which only he himself can satisfy the very constitution and frame of our nature, render happiness impossible to us, unless in a way of dependence upon him, and obedience to his laws. The lamb that grazes in the meadow, and the fish that swims in the stream, are each in their proper element. If you suppose them to change places, they must both perish. But the brute creation have no propensity to such changes as would destroy them. The instincts implanted in them by their great Creator are conducive to their welfare; and to these instincts they are uniformly faithful. If you can conceive of beasts impatient to leave the shore, and improve their situation by rushing into the ocean; and the fishes equally earnest to forsake the waters in quest of new and greater advantages upon the dry land; it may illustrate the folly of fallen man, who, turned aside by a deceived heart, refuses life, and seeks death in the error of his ways. For the will of God (if I may so speak) is our proper element; and if we depart from it, our sin unavoidably involves our punishment. We naturally indulge hard thoughts of God, and think the rule he has enjoined us too strict and severe, intended to restrain us from real good, and propose to ourselves some unknown advantages by transgressing it. Thus Satan persuaded Eve, and we derive from her: and though we know that she only gained misery by the experiment, we rashly repeat it for ourselves. The scripture assures us that the ways of God are pleasant, but we will not be persuaded. Experience proves that the way of transgressors is hard, but we resist the conviction, and hurry on in a round of continual disappointment. Are the proud, the covetous, the voluptuous, or the ambitious, happy? I appeal to conscience.

2. There is only one right way, but a thousand ways of being wrong. If you are not following him, who has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6), you are wandering, you are far from God; for none can come to the Father but by him: and far from peace, for there can be no true peace in the mind unless he bestows and maintains it. The profane and the self-righteous, the open sinner and the hypocrite, the lover of pleasure and the lover of gold, the formal Papist and the formal Protestant, though they seem to travel different roads, though they pity or censure each other, will meet at last (unless the grace of God prevent) in the same state of final and hopeless misery. It is grievous to a spiritual and benevolent mind, to see those who are all wrong disputing among themselves which of them is right. Each one is ready to think himself wise, if the folly in which he allows himself be not precisely of the same kind with that which he condemns in his neighbour. But the scripture is the invariable rule, to which it is your duty and interest to be conformed now; for it is given by the inspiration and authority of God, and is the standard by which you must be judged at last. Whatever character you bear amongst men, if you have not faith and holiness, you certainly are not in the way of life. For it is written, "He that believeth not, shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16); and again, it is written, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

3. As wandering sheep are liable to innumerable dangers which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such is our condition, until, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are stopped, and turned, and brought into the fold of the good Shepherd. Oh! the misery of man while living without God in the world! He is exposed every hour to the stroke of death, which would at once separate him from all that he loves, and plunge him into the pit, from whence there is no redemption. And at present he is perpetually harassed with cares and fears, with wants and woes, without guidance or refuge; and yet so blinded as to think himself safe, and that his crooked wandering ways will lead him to happiness!

II. An acknowledgment of mercy.—Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. Man sinned, and Messiah suffered. The Lord hath laid, or caused to meet upon him, the iniquity of us all, that is, the punishment due to them. The evils we had deserved were in pursuit of us, but Jesus interposed, and they all seized upon him, and he endured them, that we might be spared. Do we ask upon what grounds? It was on the ground of his voluntary substitution for sinners, as their covenant head and representative.

So much correspondent to this appointment obtains amongst men, as may shew that the idea accords with our notion of justice. If a man be unable to pay a debt, and the creditor should exact the payment from a

third person who was no way concerned, it would, with reason, be deemed a very oppressive action. But if it be known that this person became freely bound and responsible for the debtor, he is allowed to be justly liable. But in the present case I make no appeal to human customs. It is a divine appointment, and therefore is and must be right. It was a great design, the triumph of infinite wisdom, the highest effect of the love of God. It is revealed, not to be submitted to our discussion, or that we may sit in judgment upon the propriety of the measure, but it demands our highest admiration and praise, and, like the sun, brings with it that light by which the whole system of our knowledge is illuminated. For till we know this great truth, and are able to see its influence upon every thing we are related to, whatever attainments we may boast, we are in fact encompassed with thick darkness, with darkness which may be felt. For the accomplishment of this design, the Son of God was so manifested in the nature of man, that he, and they who believe in him, participate in a real, though mystical union, and are considered as one: he their living head, they his body, consisting of many members; each of them represented by him, accepted in him, and deriving from his fulness their life, their light, their strength, and their joy.

1. He was thus appointed and constituted before the world began, according to the holy counsel and covenant settled from everlasting (Prov. viii. 31; Tit. i. 2) for the redemption of sinners. For the fall of man, which rendered his interposition necessary, was not an unexpected contingency, but was foreseen and provided for before man was created upon the earth, yea before the foundations of the earth were laid.

2. After man had sinned, this glorious Head and Surety made known the certainty and benefit of his mediation, and engagement on the behalf of sinners, according to the good pleasure of his wisdom, and as the case required; otherwise, upon the entrance of sin, the full execution of the sentence of the law denounced against the offenders, might perhaps have immediately followed: but he revealed himself. He shewed mercy to Adam, covenanted with Noah, walked with Abraham, conversed with Moses, dwelt with his church in the wilderness, and was known by the name of the Holy One of Israel, Isa. liv. 5. David ascribes (Psal. xxiii. 1.) to the Shepherd of Israel the name of Jehovah, and Isaiah declares that the Lord of Hosts is the Husband of the church. These characters of Shepherd, and Bridegroom, and Husband, are appropriated to Messiah in the New Testament. He therefore is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, whom Abraham, David, and Isaiah worshipped, or his appearance upon earth would be evidently to the disadvantage of those who believe in him. If he were not God, he would be a creature, for there is no medium, and consequently our Shepherd would be infinitely inferior to that Almighty Shepherd who was the refuge, the trust, and the salvation of his people, before Messiah was manifested in the flesh.

3. In the fulness of time he veiled his glory. He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made of a woman, made under the law, Phil. ii. 6, 7; Gal. iv. 4. Then the union between him and the people whom he came into the world to save was completed; because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same, Heb. ii. 14. The Word, who in the beginning was God, and was with God, was made flesh, John i. 1. And in our nature, though he knew no sin, he was treated as a sinner for us, to declare the righteousness of God, in his forbearance and goodness to all who had been saved in former ages, and in the forgiveness and salvation of all who should trust in him to the end of time. He suffered once, once for all the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And now God is revealed, not only as merciful, but as just, in justifying him which believeth in Jesus. God is well pleased in him, and for his sake, with all who accept him. Their sins are expiated by his sufferings (Rom. iv. 6; Jer. xxiii. 6); and his perfect righteousness, the whole of his obedience unto death, is the consideration or ground on which they are accounted righteous.

By virtue of this union likewise he is their life. They receive out of his fulness, as the branches (John xv. 1) derive their life and fruitfulness from the tree whereon they grow; therefore the apostle said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. This is the great mystery of christianity, which words alone cannot explain: it is a divine appointment, hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own sight, but revealed to all who, with the simplicity of children, are desirous of being taught of God, and wait patiently upon him, in the use of his prescribed means, for the light and influence of his Holy Spirit.

From this subject, the substitution of Messiah for sinners, we may learn,

1. How to estimate the evil of sin. That sin is a great evil is evident by its effects. It deprived Adam of the life and presence of God, and brought death and all natural evil into the world. It caused the destruction of the old world by water. It is the source of all the misery with which the earth is now filled; it will kindle the last great conflagration, yea it has already kindled that fire which shall never be quenched. But in no view does the sinfulness of sin appear so striking as in this wonderful effect—the suffering and death of Messiah. That notwithstanding the dignity

of his person, and the perfection of his obedience to the law, and that though he prayed in his agonies, that if it were possible the cup might pass from him (Luke xxiii. 42); yet, if sinners were to be saved, it was indispensibly necessary that he should drink it. This shews the evil of sin in the strongest light; and in this light it is viewed by all who derive life from his death, and healing from his wounds. We may be afraid of the consequence of sin from other considerations, but it is only by looking to him who was pierced (Zech. xii. 10.) for our transgressions, that we can learn to hate it.

2. The complete justification of those who believe in him. They are delivered from all condemnation, Rom viii. 1. Every charge against them is over-ruled by this plea, that Christ has died, and is risen on their behalf, and ever liveth to make intercession for them. And though they are still in a state of discipline, for the mortification of sin yet remaining in them, and though, for the trial, exercise, and growth of their faith, it is still needful that they pass through many tribulations; yet none of these are strictly and properly penal. They are not the tokens of God's displeasure, but fatherly chastisements and tokens of his love, designed to promote the work of grace in their hearts, and to make them partakers of his holiness, Heb. xii. 6—11. Though necessary at present, they will not be necessary long, and therefore the hour is at hand when all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and they shall weep no more. His true servants, in the midst of the storms by which they are tossed on the tempestuous sea of this life, are no less safe, and, notwithstanding their imperfections, are no less beloved, than those who have already escaped out of the reach of every evil, and are now before the throne.

3. The reason why believers are not wearied, nor overpowered, by all the difficulties of their service, nor by all the arts and efforts of their enemies. They are one with Christ. He who has all power in heaven and in earth is engaged for their support. When they faint, he revives them; when they are wounded, he heals them; when their foot slippeth, he upholdeth them. He has said, "because I live, ye shall live also." Therefore, who can prevail against them, when their life is hidden with Christ in God? And farther, the knowledge of their Saviour's love, and of the holy, awful, yet amiable and endearing character of God displayed in his mediation, is the source of their love, gratitude, and cheerful obedience. It is this makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet. The love of Christ constraineth them, 2 Cor. v. 14. They look to him and are enlightened. And when they consider who he is, in what way, and at what a price he redeemed them, and what he has prepared for them; when they attend to his gracious word, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" Rev. ii. 10.);—they out of weakness, are made strong; they are inspired with fresh courage; they take up their cross with cheerfulness, and can adopt the language of the apostle, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy," Acts xx. 24.

SERMON XXI.

MESSIAH DERIDED UPON THE CROSS.

All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying He trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. PSALM xxii. 7, 8.

FALLEN man, though alienated from the life of God, and degraded, with respect to many of his propensities and pursuits, to a level with the beasts that perish, is not wholly destitute of kind and compassionate feelings towards his fellow-creatures. While self-interest does not interfere, and the bitter passions of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, are not roused into exercise, he has a degree of instinctive sympathy with them in their sufferings, and a disposition to assist them, if he can do it without much detriment to himself. The source of these social feelings we express by the term humanity; which seems to imply a consciousness that they properly belong to our nature, and that we ought, at least, to be always, and universally affected in this manner, when occasions offer. But while the heart is under the government of self, our humanity is very partial and limited; and it is to be ascribed to the goodness of God, rather than to any real goodness in man, that it is not wholly extinguished. Were this the case, and were the native evils of the heart left to exert themselves in their full strength and without controul, earth would be the very image of hell, and there could be no such thing as society. But to prevent things from running into utter confusion, God mercifully preserves in mankind some social dispositions. They are, however, so weak in themselves, so powerfully counteracted by the stronger principles of our depravity, and so frequently suppressed by obstinate habits of wickedness, that in the present state of things, we may almost as justly define man (whatever impropriety there may seem in the expression), by saying, "He is an inhuman creature," as by ascribing to him the benevolent properties of humanity.

The rage, cruelty, and savage insensibility, with which sin and Satan have poisoned our nature, never appear in so strong a light, as when they assume a religious form; when ignorance, bigotry, and blind zeal, oppose the

will and grace of God, under a pretence of doing him service. By this infatuation, every hateful passion is sanctified, and every feeling of humanity stifled. Thus, though the sufferings of the most atrocious malefactors usually excite pity in the spectators, and often draw tears from their eyes, yet the agonies of God's persecuted servants, under the most exquisite tortures which malice could invent, have frequently raised no other emotions than those of derision and scorn. My text leads us to consider the highest instance of this kind. The twenty-second psalm undoubtedly refers to Messiah. It begins with the very words which he uttered upon the cross; nor could David speak of himself, when he said, "They pierced my hands and my feet." He was God's servant in the most eminent sense; and the service he performed, was an uninterrupted course of benevolence to the souls and bodies of men. He spent his life in going about doing good (Acts i. 38); nor could his enemies fix a single stain upon his conduct. Yet they thirsted for his blood; and, because he came into the world to save sinners, they accomplished their cruel designs. We have already seen how he was treated by the servants and by the soldiers, when condemned by the Jewish council, and by the Roman governor. This prophecy was fulfilled when he hung upon the cross. There have been persons in our own days, whose crimes have excited such detestation, that the populace would probably have torn them in pieces, before, and even after their trial, if they could have had them in their power. Yet when these very obnoxious persons have been executed according to their sentence, if, perhaps, there was not one spectator who wished them to escape, yet neither was one found so lost to sensibility, as to insult them in their dying moments. But when Jesus suffers, all that see him, laugh him to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head; they insult his character, and his hope. The evangelists furnish us with an affecting comment upon this passage. They inform us by whom he was thus scorned and derided; they mention some circumstances, which strongly mark the peculiar and excessive contempt with which he was treated; and they take notice of the especial scope and object of their insults, namely, the gracious purpose he had often expressed towards sinners, and the strong confidence he had avowed in God his Father.

I. The persons who scorned and derided him were various, and of different characters.

1. The chief priests, elders, and rulers of the people. When these, who were held in ignorant admiration by the multitude, set the example, we do not wonder that it was generally followed. They had been his most avowed and determined enemies, they had long conspired to take away his life, and in the appointed hour their plots were permitted to succeed. They now rejoiced in their success. By their office as teachers and expounders of the law, they ought to have pointed him out to the people as the object of their reverence and hope; but having rejected him themselves, they employed all their authority and influence to make him the object of general contempt. And lest the extremity of his torments should awaken sentiments of commiseration in the multitude, they were the first, and the loudest, in reviling him, as he hung upon the cross.

2. The populace derided him. They had been instigated by the priests to demand his death of Pilate, when he was desirous of dismissing him, and rather to insist that Barabbas should be spared, Matth. xxvii. 20. The populace, though no less ignorant, were less malicious than their leaders. At different times, when they heard his public discourses, and saw his wonderful works, they had been staggered, and constrained to say, "Is not this the Son of David?" and not many days before, the popular cry had been strongly in his favour (Matth. xxi. 10, 11); though quickly after, it was, "Crucify him, crucify him," Luke xxiii. 21. As the sea, though sometimes smooth, is always disposed to obey the impulse of the wind, so the common people, though easily roused to oppose the truth, would perhaps be quiet, if they were left to themselves; but there are seldom wanting artful and designing men, who, by a pretended regard for religion, and by misrepresentations, work upon their passions and prejudices, and stir them up to a compliance with their purposes. The priests by degrees wrought the populace up, first to reject Messiah, and then to join their leaders in mocking and deriding him.

3. The Roman soldiers, who had contemptuously clothed him with a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him in derision, continued to mock him when hanging upon the cross. The Romans, to whom many monarchies were become subject and tributary, affected to despise the name of king; and they held the Jewish nation in peculiar contempt. The title, therefore, of king of the Jews, affixed to his cross, afforded them a subject for the keenest sarcasm.

4. Yea, such is the hardness of the human heart, that one of the malefactors (Luke xxiii. 39), who was crucified by his side, unaffected with his own guilt, and insensible of the just judgment of God, and of the account he was soon to render at his awful tribunal, seemed to seek some relief in the midst of his agonies, by joining with the priests and people, in railing on the innocent Jesus, who was suffering before his eyes. Thus he was the object of universal derision. They who were at the greatest distance in character and sentiment, who differed from, despised, and hated each

other, on other accounts, united as one man, in expressing every possible mark of hatred and scorn against him, who had done nothing amiss.

II. They shewed their scorn in the most pointed and cruel manner. Not only they who had clamoured for his death derided him, but others who were only passing by upon their ordinary occasions, could not pass on till they had stopped a while to insult him, wagging their heads, and reminding him of what he had formerly said, and charging him with the supposed folly and arrogance of his claims. They jested upon his wants; when he said, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. They jested upon his words; when he uttered his dolorous complaint, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" some of them, with a malicious turn (which possibly was applauded for wit by others), from the sound of the beginning of the sentence, took occasion to suggest, that by saying, *Eli, Eli,* he called for *Elias* the prophet to come to his assistance. Alas! of what dreadful malignity and obduracy is the heart of man capable? How may we conceive the heavenly hosts to have been affected with this scene, when they beheld their Lord the object of their worship and supreme love, thus treated by sinners? But it behoved him thus to suffer (Luke xxiv. 26), for he had undertaken to expiate the sins of many of his murderers, and to offer such satisfaction to the justice and law of God, as might render it consistent with his holiness and truth, to pardon the vilest offenders, who should trust in his name, in all future ages. Therefore there was no voice, arrest, or interposition from the heavenly world—thus he must be tormented, thus he must be scorned, and suspended as a spectacle to angels and to men, till he had paid the full price of redemption, and could say, "It is finished." Then, and not till then, he bowed his head, and breathed out his spirit into his Father's hands. There were, however, attestations to his dignity, in this his lowest state. He shewed, by his gracious answer to the penitent malefactor, that he had still authority upon earth to forgive sin, and to save to the uttermost; and the sun withdrew his light, and the rocks rent, though daring sinners derided and mocked.

III. The bulk of the people bore their part in this tragedy through precipitation and ignorance. In his prayer for their forgiveness (a prayer which was signally answered after his ascension) he mentioned the only extenuation their wickedness could possibly admit, They knew not what they did. It was otherwise with those who were principally concerned in procuring his death. Long before, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, they ascribed them to the agency of Beelzebub. By this malicious, wilful opposition to the strongest evidence of fact, against the conviction of their own minds, and by their violent, determined rejection of his mission, they committed the unpardonable sin. They spoke and sinned against the Holy Spirit. This sin no one can have committed, while he is fearful lest he has committed it; for it essentially consists in a deliberate and wilful refusal of the only means of salvation. It is the sign of final absolute impenitence. They who had thus ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, expressed the same height of enlightened malice against him in his dying agonies, and there was a poignancy in their insults, of which the ignorant multitude were not capable.

1. They reproached his great design, for which he came into the world, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," Matt. xxvii. 42. How different is the force of the same words, according to the intention of the speaker! When they said "His blood be upon us, and upon our children" (ver. 25), they spoke the very language of the hearts of those who love him, and who derive all their hopes and all their happiness from the application of his blood to their consciences. But, to themselves, it proved the most dreadful imprecation. So, it will be the grateful acknowledgment of his people in time, and to eternity, that when he was resolved to save them, the difficulties in the way were so great, that neither his prayers, nor his tears, nor his unspotted innocence, could prevail to save himself. But, for this his love to sinners, his enemies reviled him. Nor would they have offered to believe if he would come down from the cross, had they supposed there was the least probability of such an event, for they had often rejected evidence equal to what they now demanded.

2. They reproached him for his trust and confidence in God. He had said that God was (*Θεὸς*) his own Father (John v. 18); and they understood him to use the expression in so high a sense, as thereby to make himself equal with God. Had they misunderstood him, had he not really intended what they laid to his charge, surely he would have explained himself. This was the very ground of their proceeding against him before the council, and the formal reason of the sentence of death they pronounced against him. How often did he appeal to the testimony of the scriptures, and of John, whom they durst not but acknowledge to have been a prophet, and to his own mighty works, in support of his claim? But having fastened him upon the cross, they triumphed, and unwittingly expressed their exultation, in the very words which David had foretold should be used to Messiah. So exactly were the scriptures fulfilled, by those who used their utmost endea-

vours to evade them, and to prevent their accomplishment.

But what is all this to us? It is very much to us. Christ could suffer but once, yet we read of those who crucify him afresh. His gospel represents his personal ministry, declares his character, reveals his love, produces the same effects in those who receive it, and they who oppose it are considered as opposing him, and are influenced by the same spirit which instigated the unbelieving Jews. It is to be hoped that many reject and scorn it, as the multitude did of old, through ignorance, and that the intercession of him who prayed for those that knew not what they did, will prevail for their conversion. Whenever their eyes are opened, they will be pricked to the heart (Acts ii. 37), and will then gladly inquire of those whom they now despise, What they must do to be saved? But it is to be feared, there are in christian countries many persons who too nearly resemble the spirit and conduct of the Jewish rulers, whose opposition proceeds from rooted enmity to the truth, persisted in against light that has sometimes forced upon their minds, and who, though convinced, will not be persuaded. They who despise, calumniate, and scorn the believers of the gospel, would certainly offer the like treatment to the Author of it, if he was within their reach. They are ill-treated for his sake, and he considers it as an affront to himself. Thus he said to Saul of Tarsus, when breathing out threatenings against his disciples, "Why persecutest thou me?" They who reject his ministers, reject him, Luke x. 16. They who speak disdainfully of his dying himself to save others; they who reproach or ridicule the humble confidence of his people; who censure and revile their hopes and comforts derived from his good word, as enthusiasm or hypocrisy; who have no compassion for their distresses, but rather wound them as with a sword in their bones, saying unto them, Where is now your God? (Psal. cxv. 2.) are certainly treading, if not altogether with equal vehemence, in the footsteps of the Jewish rulers.—May the Lord in mercy shew them the danger of their path, and give them a timely apprehension of the destruction to which it leads! That they may humble themselves to his will, implore his pardon, espouse his cause, and experience the comforts and privileges of that gospel which they have hitherto reviled and scorned.

SERMON XXII.

MESSIAH UNPITIED, AND WITHOUT COMFORTER.

Reproach [rebuke] *hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.*

PSALM lxix. 20.

THE greatness of suffering cannot be certainly estimated by the single consideration of the immediate apparent cause; the impression it actually makes upon the mind of the sufferer must likewise be taken into the account. That which is a heavy trial to one person, may to another be much lighter, and perhaps no trial at all; and a state of outward prosperity, in which the eye of a bystander can see nothing wanting to happiness, may be, and I doubt not often is, a state of torment to the possessor. On the other hand, we know that the consolations with which it has sometimes pleased God to cheer his suffering servants, have enabled them to rejoice in the greatest extremities. They have triumphed upon the rack, and while their flesh was consuming by the fire. The Lord has had many followers, who, for his sake, have endured scourgings, and tortures, and terrible deaths, not only without reluctance or dismay, but without a groan. But he himself was terrified, amazed, and filled with anguish, when he suffered for us. Shall we say, The disciples, in such cases, have been superior to their Master, when yet they acknowledged that they derived all their strength and resolution from him? This difference cannot be well accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings were a proper atonement for sin, and who can see no other reason for his death, than that by dying he was to seal the truth of his doctrine, and to propose himself to us as an example of constancy and patience. But the great aggravation of Messiah's sufferings was the suspension of those divine supports which enable his people to endure the severest afflictions to which he calls them. Perhaps some persons who acknowledge our Lord's true character, may, upon that ground, think his agonies less insupportable, since he was not a mere man, but God in the human nature. It was indeed the dignity of his person that gave influence and efficacy to all that he did and suffered for sinners. It is likewise true that the weight laid upon him was more than any mere creature could sustain. I would speak with reverence and reserve upon a point which is too high for our weak minds fully to comprehend; but in whatever way the nature of man, which he assumed, was upheld by his eternal power and Godhead, we may venture to affirm that

he derived no sensible comfort from it. For we have his own testimony, that in this sense God had forsaken him. The divine nature could neither bleed nor suffer. He was truly and properly a man; and as a man he suffered, and he suffered alone. Many of his servants have rejoiced while they were tormented, because God overbalanced all they felt with the light of his countenance; but the Saviour himself, deprived of this light, experienced, to the uttermost, all that sin deserved, that was not inconsistent with the perfection of his character. My text expresses, so far as human words and ideas can reach, his exquisite distress, when he bore our sins in his own body, upon the tree. Reproach broke his heart, and when he looked for pity and comfort, he found none.

I. Reproach hath broken my heart.—We must not confine our thoughts here to the reproach of his enemies. The passage in the Messiah expresses it agreeably to the version of the Psalms used in our liturgy, *Thy rebuke*. Though he knew no sin, he was made sin for us. He was accounted and treated as a sinner. Now a sinner is deservedly the greatest object of contempt in the universe, and indeed the only object of deserved contempt. Thus he incurred the reproach of the law and justice of God. The Holy Father, viewing the Son of his love in this light, as charged with the sins of his people, forsook him. God infinitely hates sin, and will have no fellowship with it; and of this he gave the most awful proof, by forsaking his beloved Son, when he took upon him to answer for the sins of men. Then the sword of the Almighty awoke against him, and he spared him not, Zech. xiii. 7.

This rebuke broke his heart. Let broken-hearted sinners look by faith upon a broken-hearted Saviour. The phrase denotes woe and dejection inconceivable, with a failure of all resource. Any thing may be borne while the spirit, the heart remains firm, but if the heart itself be broken, who can endure. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Proverbs, xviii. 14.

It is not therefore, surprising, that he says, "I am full of heaviness." In the evangelists we read, that "he began to be sore amazed and very heavy" (Mat. xxvi. 37, 38; Mark xiv. 33); and he said to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The most emphatical words are used to describe his sensation of the bitter conflict of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane, when as yet the hand of man had not touched him. He began (ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι) to be amazed or astonished. It properly signifies, to be struck with terror and surprise by some supernatural power, such as Belshazzar felt when he suddenly saw the handwriting against him upon the wall (Dan. v. 6); and (ἀδημονεῖν) to be very heavy, sated with grief, full, so as to be incapable of more. Some critics explain the word, as importing such an oppression of mind as quite unfits a person for converse or society. [Compare Job xxx. 29.] He said "My soul is (περίλυπος) exceeding sorrowful,' —surrounded, encompassed with sorrows. It is added, he was in (ἀγωνία) an agony (Luke xxii. 44),—a consternation of mind, such as arises from the prospect of some impending, unavoidable evil, like the suspense of mariners upon the point of shipwreck, who tremble equally at the view of the raging waves behind them, and the rocky shore before their eyes, on which they expect in a few moments to be dashed. The evils he was to bear and to expiate were now collecting to a point, and formed a dark tremendous storm, just ready to break upon his devoted head, and the prospect filled his soul with unutterable horror, so that his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Many have sweat under extremity of pain or terror, but his agonies, and the effect of them, were peculiar to himself: His sweat was blood.

This is not a subject for declamation. It rather becomes us to adore in humble silence the manifestation of the goodness and severity of God (Rom. xi. 22) in the Redeemer's sufferings, than to indulge conjecture and the flights of imagination. What is expressly revealed we may assert, contemplate, and admire. His soul was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. We know but little of the extreme malignity of sin, because we have but faint views of the majesty, holiness, and goodness of God, against whom it is committed. Yet a single sin, if clothed with all its aggravations, and the guilt of it brought home with power to the heart, is sufficient to make the sinner a terror to himself. Adam had sinned but once when he lost all comfort and confidence in God, and sought to hide himself. We have but slight thoughts of the extent of sin. Not only positive disobedience, but want of conformity to the law of God, is sinful. Every rising thought which does not comport with that reverence, dependence, and love which is due to God from creatures constituted, furnished, and indebted as we are, is sinful. The sins of one person in thought, word, and deed, sins of omission and commission, are innumerable. What then is contained in the collective idea, in what the scripture calls the sin of the world? What then must be the atonement, the consideration on the account of which the great God is no less righteous than merciful, in forgiving the sins, which his inviolable truth, and the honour of his government, engage him to punish. And they are punished, though forgiven. They were charged upon Jesus; they exposed him to a rebuke which broke his heart. They filled him with heaviness. When, therefore, we are assured that the justice of God is satisfied, with respect to every sinner of the race

of mankind, who, in obedience to the divine command, makes the sufferings of the Saviour his plea for pardon, and trusts in him for salvation, and that upon this one ground they are freed from all condemnation, and accepted as children; when we are told that the glory of the divine perfections is displayed in the highest, by this method of saving millions who deserved to perish, we safely infer the greatness of the cause from the greatness of the effect. The sufferings of Christ, which free a multitude of sinners from the guilt of innumerable sins, must have been inconceivably great indeed!

II. Under this accumulated distress, though his will was perfectly submissive to the will of God, and his determination fixed to endure all that the case required; yet as he was truly a man, he felt like a man. His fortitude was very different from a stoical hardness of spirit. All the affections of pure humanity, whatever does not imply sin, such as impatience under suffering, and an undue, premature desire of deliverance, operated in him, as they might do in one of us. It was no impeachment of his innocence, or of his willingness, that he wished, if it were possible, for some relief or alleviation of his misery. He looked, as we do when we are in heaviness, for some to have pity on him, and to comfort him, but there was none. Though the pity of our friends is often ineffectual, and can afford us no real assistance, yet it gives a little relief to have those about us to whom we can open our minds, who will sympathize with us, and compassionately attend to our complaints, if they can do no more. And to be neglected and forsaken in extremity, especially by those who have professed great friendship, or are under great obligations to us, will be felt as an aggravation of the most distressing case that can be imagined. But thus it was with Messiah. He had to complain, not only of the cruelty of his enemies, but of the insensibility and inconstancy of those who had professed the most cordial attachment to him. The impression thus made upon him as a man was such, that it is distinctly specified in the prophetical enumeration of the ingredients which composed the bitter cup of his sufferings.

He was not only apprehended by cruel men, but betrayed into their hands by one whom he had admitted into the number of his select apostles, who had been employed in his service, favoured with access to him in his more retired hours, and was present, with the rest, when he kept his last passover, and took his solemn and affectionate leave of them before he entered upon his passion. It was not an avowed enemy, but one of the twelve who dipped with him in the dish, that was guilty of this enormous ingratitude and treachery. How keen are our resentments, if those to whom we have shewn great kindness are discovered to have studied our ruin while they wore the mask of friendship? Though Messiah was incapable of any sinful perturbation of mind, he was very capable of being painfully affected by the conduct of Judas: he had reason to look for pity from him, but he found none.

When he entered the garden of Gethsemane, he commanded, may I not say, he intreated, his disciples to tarry there and watch with him. And to engage their utmost attention, he spoke plainly to them of his distress, saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Yet when he returned unto them, the first, the second, yea, the third time, he found them sleeping. How tender, yet how forcible was his expostulation! "Could ye not watch one hour?" Matth. xxvii. 40. What! could they know that their Lord was in an agony, wrestling with strong cries and tears, and yet sleep! as regardless of his sorrows as of their own approaching danger! Were our dearest friends to shew themselves equally insensible when we were in extreme anguish, would not their indifference wound our spirits? He also was a man; and we may conceive it some addition to his grief, that when he looked to them for pity and comfort, he found none.

When he was apprehended, notwithstanding their former protestation of zeal and love, they all forsook him and fled, Matt. xxvi. 56. They sought their own safety, and left him in the hands of his enemies. The apostle Paul was thus deserted, and his expressions intimate that he felt it. "At my first answer, no man stood by me, all men forsook me," 2 Tim. iv. 16. He had imbibed likewise the spirit of his master, and prayed that it might not be laid to their charge. And though the Lord Jesus pitied and excused the weakness of his disciples, and permitted them to take care of themselves, it was in them an instance how little he could depend upon those who were under the strongest obligations to him.

But Peter followed his Lord to the hall of the High Priest, and there saw him, with his own eyes, insulted, arraigned, and unjustly condemned. Might he not expect that Peter, the most active and earnest of all his followers, would have pitied him, at least at such a time. Alas! instead of pitying him, Peter denied him; he denied, with oaths and imprecations, that he had any knowledge of him, whom he had seen transfigured upon the mount, and agonizing in the garden. We read, that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, Luke xxiv. 61. Who can conceive the energy of that look? It was full of meaning, and Peter well understood it. Surely, though a look of tenderness and compassion, it conveyed the expostulation of an injured benefactor, no less forcibly, than if all who were present had heard him say, "Peter, is this the pity I am to expect from thee?"

When he was nailed to the cross, he was surrounded only by enemies. These, as we

have seen, far from pitying, or attempting to comfort him, derided and mocked him. How have some of us felt for our friends in their dying hours, though we have seen every possible attention paid to them, and every thing provided and done for them that could administer to their relief and comfort! But they who have the faith which realizes unseen things, have beheld their best Friend expiring in tortures, and insulted by his murderers in his last moments.

But had all his disciples been near him, and had all his enemies been his friends, still, in his situation, he would have been alone. The loss of the light of God's countenance will, to the soul that has enjoyed it, create a universal solitude, and render every earthly good tasteless, in proportion as that soul is united to him in love; and still more, if there be superadded a sense of his displeasure. They who have never tasted that the Lord is good, not having known the difference, can have no conception of this subject. Their minds are at present occupied with earthly things; and while they are thus engaged with trifles, they cannot believe, though they are repeatedly told it, that to an immortal spirit, a separation from the favour of God involves in it the very essence of misery. But should death surprise them in their sins, tear them from all that they have seen and loved, and plunge them into an unknown, unchangeable world, then (alas! too late!) they will be sensible of their immense, irreparable loss, in being cut off from the fountain of life and comfort. A suspension of this divine presence, with an awful sense and feeling of what those for whom he made himself responsible deserved, was the most dreadful part of the Redeemer's sufferings. He was perfectly united to the will and love of his heavenly Father, and, by the perfect holiness of his nature, incapable of tasting satisfaction in any thing else, if his presence were withdrawn. But when he endured the curse of the law for us, he looked to God for pity and comfort, but he found none.

In this glass we are to contemplate the demerit of sin. But there are some sufferings due to the impenitent sinner, of which Messiah was not capable. I mean the consciousness of personal guilt, the gnawings of a remorseful conscience, and the rage of despair. If we add the idea of eternity to the whole, we may form some faint judgment of what they are delivered from who believe in him, and what misery awaits those who presume to reject him. Awful thought! to reject the only Saviour. If they refuse his mediation, they must answer in their own persons. Then they will find no pity, no comforter! For who, or what, can comfort, when the Lord God Omnipotent arises to punish? What will your pleasures, your wealth, or friends, do for you, when the hand of the Lord shall touch you to the quick? What smile can you expect will support you against the terror of his frown?

Should any of you hear the Messiah performed again, then and there, if not before, may God impress upon your heart the sense of this passage. Then you will understand, that the sufferings of the Son of God are by no means a proper subject for the amusement of a vacant hour.

SERMON XXIII.

NO SORROW LIKE MESSIAH'S SORROW.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow! LAMENTATIONS, i. 12.

ALTHOUGH the scriptures of the Old Testament, the law of Moses, the psalms, and the prophecies (Luke xxiv. 44), bear a harmonious testimony to Messiah, it is not necessary to suppose, that every single passage has an immediate and direct relation to him. A method of exposition has frequently obtained, of a fanciful and allegorical cast, under the pretext of spiritualizing the word of God. Ingenious men, and sometimes men not very ingenious, have endeavoured to discover types and mysteries in the plainest historical parts, where we have no sufficient evidence that the Holy Spirit intended to teach them. And upon very slight grounds a proof has been attempted of the great doctrines of the gospel, which may be proved, much more safely and solidly, from the passages of scripture in which they are plainly and expressly revealed. But by taking this course, instead of throwing real light upon the places they have in this manner attempted to explain, they have perplexed their hearers and readers, and led them to question, whether there be any fixed and determinate sense of scripture that may be fully depended upon. It is true, when we have the authority of an inspired expositor to lead us, we may follow him without fear; but this will not warrant us to strike out a path for ourselves, and trust to our conjectures, where we have not such an infallible guide. The epistle to the Hebrews is a key to explain to us many passages in a higher sense than perhaps we should have otherwise understood them. But it is best for us to keep within safe bounds, and to propose our own sentiments, when not supported by New Testament authority, with great modesty, lest we should incur the censure of being wise above what is written. I may, without scruple, affirm, that the history of Sarah and Hagar is an allegory referring to the two covenants, because the apostle Paul (Gal. iv. 24) has affirmed it before me; but if I attempted to

spiritualise the history of Leah and Rachel likewise, you would not be bound to believe me without proof. I may preach the gospel of Christ from a text which mentions the manna or the brazen serpent (John iii. 14; vi. 31, 35), because our Lord has expounded these things as typical of himself: but I must not be confident that every resemblance which I think I can trace is the true sense of the place; because I may imagine many resemblances and types which the scripture does not authorize.

There is, however, a useful way of preaching, by accommodation, that is, when the literal sense is first clearly stated, to apply the passage, not directly to prove a doctrine as if really contained in it, but only to illustrate the doctrine expressly taught in other parts of the scripture. Thus, for instance, if the question of Jonadab to Amnon (2 Sam. xiii. 4) were chosen for the subject of a discourse, "Why art thou, being a king's son, lean from day to day?" the history of the context directly proves the malignity of sinful inordinate desire, and the misery of those who are under its dominion; that it poisons every situation in life, and renders the sinner incapable of satisfaction, though he were a king's son. The form of the question might then lead to observe, That believers are king's sons, to show what are the great privileges of their adoption; and to enquire how it comes to pass, that many persons so highly privileged are lean, that is uncomfortable, weak and languishing in their profession? These points might not improperly be introduced by way of accommodation, though they are not directly deducible from the literal sense of the question.

The text I have just read to you has led me into this digression. I find it in the series of the passages in the Messiah; but I am not sure, that in the literal sense it immediately refers to him. It is a pathetic exclamation, by which the prophet Jeremiah expresses his grief, or rather the grief of Jerusalem, when the sins of the people had given success to the Chaldean army, and the temple and the city were destroyed. Jerusalem is poetically considered as a woman, lately reigning a queen among the nations, but now a captive, dishonoured, spoiled, and sitting upon the ground. She intreats the commiseration of those who pass by, and asks, if there be any sorrow like unto her sorrow? Such a question has often been in the heart and in the mouth of the afflicted, especially in an hour of impatience. We are all, in our turns, disposed to think our own trials peculiarly heavy, and our own cases singular. But to them who ask this question, we may answer, Yes—there has been a sorrow greater than yours, greater than the sorrow of Jeremiah, or of Jerusalem. They who have heard of the sorrows of Jesus, will surely, upon the hearing of this question, be reminded of him, whether it was the intention of the prophet to personate him or not. If we conceive of him hanging upon the cross, and speaking in this language to us, "Was ever any sorrow like my sorrow?" must not we reply with admiration and gratitude, "No, Lord, never was love, never was grief, like thine."

The expostulation and the question are equally applicable to the sufferings of Messiah. The former indeed is not inserted in the Oratorio, but I am not willing to leave it out. The highest wonder ever exhibited to the world, to angels, and men, is the Son of God suffering and dying for sinners. Next to this, hardly any thing is more astonishing to an enlightened mind—than the gross and stupid insensibility with which the sufferings of the Saviour are treated, and the indifference with which this wonderful event is regarded by creatures who are so nearly concerned in it. If they believe in him, they will be healed by his wounds, and live by his death. If they finally reject him, they must perish; and their guilt and misery will be greatly aggravated by what they have heard of him! But sin has so blinded our understandings and hardened our hearts, that we have naturally no feeling either for him or for ourselves.

I. Is the expostulation suited to any person here? Can I, with propriety, say to some who are now present, Has this subject been hitherto nothing to you? Then, surely, you have not heard of it before; and, therefore, now you do hear of it, you will, you must be affected. If you were to read in the common newspapers, that a benevolent and excellent person had fallen into the hands of murderers, who had put him to death in the most cruel manner, would it not be something to you? Could you avoid impressions of surprise, indignation, and grief? Surely, if this transaction were news to you, it would engross your thoughts. But alas! you have rather heard of it too often, till it has become to you as a worn-out tale. I am willing to take it for granted that you allow the fact. You believe that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was condemned by the Jews, and crucified by the Romans. And is it possible this should be nothing to you? Is it too insignificant to engage or deserve your attention? And yet, perhaps, you have wept at a representation or a narrative which you knew was wholly founded in fiction. How strange! What! the sorrows of Jesus nothing to you! when you admit that he suffered for sinners, and will probably admit that you are a sinner. No longer then boast of your sensibility! your heart must be a heart of stone. Yet thus it is with too many; your tempers, your conduct, give evidence that hitherto the death of Jesus has been nothing to you. You would not have acted otherwise, at least you

would not have acted worse, if you had never heard of his name. Were his sufferings any thing to you, is it possible, that you would live in the practice of those sins, for which no atonement could suffice but his blood? Were you duly affected by the thought of his crucifixion, is it possible that you could crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame, by bearing the name of a christian, and yet living in a course unsuitable to the spirit and precepts of his gospel? But if you are indifferent to his grief, is it nothing to you on your own account? What! is it nothing to you whether you are saved or perish; whether you are found at his right, or his left hand, in the great day of his appearance; or whether he shall then say to you, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" or, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire? Matth. xxvi. 34: 41. There is no medium, no alternative. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. This lamentable indifference to the Redeemer's sorrows, is a full proof of the baseness and wickedness of the human heart; and it is felt as such, when the Holy Spirit convinces of sin. Natural conscience may excite a painful conviction of the sinfulness of many actions. But this stupid unbelief of the heart is, if I may so speak, the sin of sins, it is the root and source of every evil, and yet so congenial to our very frame as we are depraved creatures, that God alone can make the sinner feel it (John xvi. 9); and when he does feel it, the sense of it wounds and grieves him more than all his other sins.

II. With respect to the question, if we rightly understand what has been observed from the scripture-history, in the six preceding sermons, concerning the particulars of his passion; we may answer without hesitation, Never was suffering, or sorrow, like that which Messiah endured in the day of the Lord's fierce anger. It is possible that history, which is little more than a detail of the cruelty and wickedness of mankind, may furnish us with instances of many persons who have suffered excruciating torments, and have even been mocked and insulted in their agonies: But,

1. Was there ever a character of his dignity and excellence treated in such a manner? Job considered his former state as a great aggravation of his sufferings. He enlarges upon the respect which had been shown him in his prosperity. "When I went out to the gate, through the city, the young men saw me and hid themselves, the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me," Job xxix. 8, 11. But afterwards, speaking of fools, of base men, of the vilest of the earth, he adds, "Now am I their song, yea, their by-word. They abhor me, and spare not to spit in my face. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they come upon me as a wide breaking in of waters," chap. xxx. 8—14. But Jesus was the Lord of glory. He whom all the angels of God worshipped, was buffeted and spit upon by the lowest rabble. If a great king was degraded from his throne, and exposed to the derision of slaves, this would be a small thing compared with the humiliation of him, who, in his own right, was King of kings, and Lord of lords.

2. Was there ever so innocent a sufferer? When Aaron lost his two sons, he held his peace, Lev. x. 3. A little before he had been guilty of making the golden calf. The remembrance of this offence composed his mind under his great trial. He saw that he deserved a still heavier punishment, and was silent. In like manner, David, when his rebellious son Absalom conspired against his life, was patient; he remembered the adultery and murder he had committed; and, though he mourned under his afflictions, he durst not complain, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. The malefactor upon the cross submitted to his sentence, because he was a malefactor, saying, "And we indeed justly," Luke xxiv. 41. It is thus with all who know themselves. Under their severest afflictions, they admit the propriety of the prophet's question, "Why should a living man complain?" Lam. iii. 39. And they acknowledge, that it is of the Lord's great mercy they are not utterly consumed. But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled; he had fulfilled the whole law, and had done nothing amiss; yet he yielded himself as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, Is. liii. 7.

3. Did ever any other sufferer experience in an equal degree the day of God's fierce anger? In the greatest of our sufferings, in those which bear the strongest marks of the Lord's displeasure, there is always some mitigation, some mixture of mercy. At the worst, we have still reason to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor according to the full desert of our iniquities, Psal. ciii. 10. If we are in pain, we do not feel every kind of pain at once, yet we can give no sufficient reason why we should not. If we are exercised with poverty and losses, yet something worth the keeping, and more than we can justly claim, is still left to us, at least our lives are spared, though forfeited by sin. If we are in distress of soul, tossed with tempest and not comforted, we are not quite out of the reach of hope. Even if sickness, pain, loss, and despair, should all overtake us in the same moment, all is still less than we deserve. Our proper desert is hell, an exclusion from God, and confinement with Satan and his angels, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Every thing short of this is a mercy. But Jesus, though he had no sin of his own, bore the

sins of many. His sufferings were indeed temporary, limited in their duration, but otherwise extreme. Witness the effects, his heaviness unto death, his consternation, his bloody sweat, his eclipse upon the cross, when deprived of that presence, which was his only, and his exceeding joy. On these accounts, no sorrow was like unto his sorrow!

The unknown sorrows of the Redeemer are a continual source of support and consolation to his believing people. In his sufferings they contemplate his atonement, his love, and his example, and they are animated by the bright and glorious issue. For he passed from death to life, from suffering to glory.

(1.) His atonement, apprehended by faith, delivers them from guilt and condemnation, gives them peace with God, and access to him with liberty as children, Rom. v. 1, 2. Being thus delivered from their heavy burden, and from the power of Satan, and having a way open for receiving supplies of strength, according to their day, they are prepared to take up their cross, and to follow him.

(2.) His love, in submitting to such sorrows for their sakes, attaches their hearts to him. Great is the power of love! It makes hard things easy, and bitter sweet. Some of us can tell, or rather we cannot easily tell how much we would cheerfully do, or bear, or forbear, for the sake of the person whom we dearly love. But this noblest principle of the soul never can exert itself with its full strength, till it is supremely fixed upon its proper object. The love of Christ has a constraining force indeed! 2 Cor. v. 14. It is stronger than death. It overcomes the world. And we thus love him because he first loved us; because he loved us and gave himself for us, 1 John iv. 19; Gal. ii. 20.

(3.) His example. The thought that he suffered for them, arms them with the like mind. They look to him and are enlightened. By his cross they are crucified to the world, and the world to them. They no longer court its favour, nor are afraid of its frown. They know what they must expect, if they will be his servants, by the treatment he met with; and they are content. He who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself for them, is worthy that they should suffer likewise for him. It is their desire, neither to provoke the opposition of men nor to dread it. They commit themselves to him, and are sure that he will not expose them to such sufferings as he endured for them. So, likewise, under all the trials and afflictions which they endure more immediately from the hand of the Lord, a lively thought of his sorrows reconciles them to their own. Thus by his stripes they are healed, and are comforted by having fellowship with him in his sufferings.

(4.) Lastly, if more were necessary (and, sometimes, through remaining infirmity and surrounding temptation, every consideration is no more than necessary), they know that their Lord passed through sufferings to glory. And they know (for they have his own gracious promise) that if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him, John xii. 26; Rom. viii. 18. They are sure that the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the joy which will then be revealed; and that when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory (Col. iii. 4); and therefore they are comforted in all their tribulation, and can say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy," Acts xx. 24.

SERMON XXIV.

MESSIAH'S INNOCENCE VINDICATED.

He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ISAIAH, liii 8.

LET not plain christians be stumbled, because there are difficulties in the prophetical parts of the scripture, and because translators and expositors sometimes explain them with some difference as to the sense. Whatever directly relates to our faith, practice, and comfort, may be plainly collected from innumerable passages, in which all the versions, and all sober expositors, are agreed. That there are some differences, will not appear strange, if we consider the antiquity of the Hebrew language, and that the Old Testament is the only book extant that was written during the time that it was the common language of the people. For this reason we meet with many words which occur but once; and others, which do not occur frequently, are evidently used in more than one sense. If we suppose that a time should come when the English language should be no longer spoken, and no more than a single volume in it be preserved, we may well conceive that posterity might differ as to the sense of many expressions, notwithstanding the assistances they might obtain by comparing the English with the French, Dutch, and other languages, which were in use at the same period. Such assistance we derive from the Chaldee, Syriac, Greek, and other ancient versions of the Old Testament, sufficient to confirm us in the true sense of the whole, and to throw light upon many passages otherwise dark and dubious; and yet there will remain a number of places, the sense of which the best critics have not

been able to fix with certainty. Farther, the prophecies are usually expressed in the style of poetry, which, in all languages, is remote from the common forms of speaking. The grand evidence, to a humble mind, that the holy scripture was originally given by inspiration of God, and that the version of it which by his good providence we are favoured with is authentic, is the effect it has upon the heart and conscience when enlightened by the Holy Spirit. And without this internal, experimental evidence, the learned are no less at a loss than the vulgar.

An acquaintance with the Hebrew will perhaps suggest a meaning in this verse (the latter part only of which is taken into the Messiah) which may not readily occur to an English reader. But the purport of it is plainly expressed in many other passages. The text is not merely a repetition of what was spoken before concerning the Redeemer's sufferings; rather the declaration of what was to follow them begins here. It is the opening of a bright and glorious subject. He was taken, he was taken up, like Enoch and Elijah, from prison, and from judgment, and who can declare his generation? or (as the word properly signifies) his age? Who can declare his state, the establishment and duration of his dignity, influence, and government? For though he was cut off, made an excision and a curse, from amongst men, it was not upon his own account, but for the transgression of my people, that he was smitten.

God was manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. iii. 16), and in the flesh he suffered as a malefactor. Undoubtedly the divine nature is incapable of suffering; but the human nature, which did suffer, was assumed by him who is over all, God, blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5. But he was justified in the Spirit, and sufficient care was taken, that in his lowest humiliation, though he was condemned and reviled, his character should be vindicated. I shall therefore consider at present the testimonies given to his innocence. Though he was cut off from the land of the living, it was only as a substitute for others. He was stricken for the transgressions of his people.

1. The first attention, and which of itself is fully sufficient to establish this point, is that of Judas. He was one of the twelve apostles who attended our Lord's person, and who were admitted to a nearer and more frequent intercourse with him than the rest of his disciples. Though our Lord knew that his heart was corrupt, and that he would prove a traitor, he does not appear to have treated him with peculiar reserve, or to have kept him more at a distance than the other apostles; for when he told them, "One of you shall betray me," they had no particular suspicion of Judas. He therefore was well acquainted with the more retired hours of his Master's life. He had been often with him in Gethsemane before he went thither to betray him to his enemies. When he had acted this treacherous part, if he, who had been frequently present when Jesus conversed most freely in private with his select followers, had known any thing amiss in his conduct, we may be sure he would gladly have disclosed it, for his own justification. Christian societies have usually been reviled and slandered by those who have apostatized from them; their mistakes, if they were justly chargeable with any, have been eagerly published and aggravated, and many things often laid to their charge which they knew not. But Judas, on the contrary, was compelled by his conscience, to return his ill-gotten gain to the chief priests and elders, and to confess, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," Matt. xxvii. 4. Considering the time of making this declaration, when he saw that he was already condemned, and the persons to whom he made it, even to those who had condemned him, it cannot be denied that he was an unsuspected and competent witness to his innocence. And the answer of the chief priests implied, that, though their malice could be satisfied with nothing less than the death of this innocent person, they were unable to contradict the traitor's testimony.

2. Though Pilate likewise condemned Messiah to death, to gratify the importunity of the Jews, he repeatedly declared his firm persuasion of his innocence; and he did it with great solemnity. "He took water and washed his hands (publicly) before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person," Matt. xxvii. 24. He laboured for his release, though the fear of man prevailed upon him at last, as it has upon many, to act in defiance of the light and conviction of his conscience. And from him we learn, that Herod (Luke xxiii. 15), notwithstanding he mocked him and set him at nought, considered the accusations of his enemies to be entirely groundless. And farther, when the Jews proposed such an alteration of the title affixed to his cross, as might imply, that the claims our Lord had made were unjust and criminal, Pilate utterly refused to comply with their demand.

3. The thief upon the cross, with his dying breath said, "This man hath done nothing amiss." If his competency as a witness should be disputed, because it is probable he had known but little of him, I admit the objection. Be it so, that this malefactor had little personal knowledge of our Lord. Then his opinion of his innocence must have been founded upon public report; and, therefore, it seems, he spoke not for himself only; but his words may be taken as a proof, that the people at large, though they suffered themselves to be influenced by the chief priests, to demand his death, and to prefer Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, to him, were generally conscious

that he had done nothing amiss. Many of those who now said, "Crucify him, Crucify him," had, not long before, welcomed him with acclamations of praise, saying, "Hosannah to the son of David." This inconsistence and inconstancy is not altogether surprising to those who are well acquainted with the weakness and wickedness of human nature in its present state; and who consider the effects which the misrepresentations and artifice of persons of great name, and in high office, have often produced in the minds of the ignorant and superstitious. Thus at Lystra, through the persuasion of the Jews, the apostle Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts xiv. 12, 19), by the very people, who, a little before, could with difficulty be restrained from paying him divine honours.

4. Though the salvation of men, and the honour of the law of God required, that when Messiah undertook to make an atonement for our sins, he should be thus given up to the rage and cruelty of his enemies, suffer all the infamy due to the worst and vilest transgressors, and be deserted by God and man; yet his heavenly Father bore a signal and solemn testimony to his character. The frame of nature sympathized with her suffering Lord. The heavens were clothed with sackcloth; the sun withdrew his shining; the sanctuary was laid open, by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom; the earth trembled greatly; the rocks were rent; the graves opened, and the dead arose. These events, in connection with what had passed before, extorted an acknowledgment of his innocence from the Roman centurion who was appointed to attend his execution.

Thus, it appears, that Judas, who betrayed him; the Jewish council, which could not find sufficient ground, even though they employed false and suborned witnesses to pass sentence upon him; Herod, who derided him; Pilate, who condemned him; the malefactor who suffered with him; and the commander of the soldiers who crucified him, all combined in a declaration of his innocence: God himself confirming their word, by signs and wonders in heaven and upon earth.

It may seem quite unnecessary to prove the innocency of him, who, in his human nature, was absolutely perfect, and in whom the presence and fulness of God dwelt; and it is indeed unnecessary to those who believe in his name. It is, however, a pleasing contemplation to them, and has an important influence upon their faith and hope. In this they triumph, that he who knew no sin himself, was made sin, was treated as a sinner for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. The High Priest of our profession needed not, as those who typified his office of old, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for he was perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. And had he not been a lamb without spot or blemish, he could not have been accepted on our behalf. It was the perfection of his voluntary obedience to the law of our nature, under which he submitted to be made, which, conjoined with the excellency of his character as the Son of God, made him meet, able, and worthy, to expiate our transgressions. By the one offering of himself, once offered, he has made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and having appeared with his own blood within the vail, in the presence of God for us, and ever living to make intercession for all who come unto God by him, he is proposed in the gospel as the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. In him, all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory, Is. xli. 17, 25. In him the true Israel, the partakers of the faith of Abraham, shall be saved, saved to the uttermost, saved with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.

But who that knows these things can sufficiently commiserate the fatal effects of that unbelief which blinds and hardens the hearts of multitudes! especially that more learned and informed, and therefore more inexcusable unbelief, which characterizes the modern patrons of scepticism. They read and admire ancient history. There is no old story so frivolous or improbable, but it is sufficient to engage their attention, and to exercise their acumen, if it be found in Herodotus or Livy. They spare no pains, they perplex themselves, and weary their readers with their attempts to decypher an ancient inscription, or to fix the date, or reconcile the circumstances of a supposed event, which, after all, perhaps never had place but in the imagination of the writer. Their implicit deference to such uncertain authorities as these, often verges upon the border of extreme credulity. The Bible is an ancient history likewise; and if it was only received upon the footing of the rest, as merely a human composition, the facts which it relates, and the manner in which they are related, the admirable simplicity of narration in some parts, the unrivalled sublimity of description in others; the justness and discrimination of characters; the views it unfolds of the workings of the human heart, and the springs of action, so exactly conformable to experience and observation, might surely recommend it to their notice. And possibly, if it did claim no higher authority than a human composition, men who have any just pretensions to taste, would admire it no less than they now undervalue it. But because it does not flatter their pride, nor give indulgence to their corrupt propensities, they are afraid to study it, lest the internal marks of its divine original should force unwelcome convictions upon their minds. Therefore they remain willingly ignorant of its contents, or the

knowledge they discover of it is so very superficial, that a well instructed child of ten years of age may smile at the mistakes of critics and philosophers. That such a book is extant, is undeniable. How can they account for its production? A view of what they actually have done, will warrant us to assert, that the wisest men of antiquity, neither would have written such a book if they could, nor were they able, had they been ever so willing. And yet we have as good evidence, that the New Testament was written by plain and unlearned men, as we have for any fact recorded in history. How could such men invent such a book? and how should they without seeming directly to design it, but incidently as it were, represent, that persons of such various characters, who concurred in putting Jesus to death, should all equally concur in establishing the testimony of his innocence.

True christians, when they suffer unjustly, may learn, from the example of their Lord, to suffer patiently. The apostle presses this argument upon servants (1 Pet. ii. 18, &c.)—who in those days were chiefly bond servants, or slaves. He, therefore, evidently supposes, that the knowledge of the gospel was sufficient to qualify people in the lowest situations of human life, with a fortitude and magnanimity of spirit of which philosophy could scarcely reach the conception. In effect, to be much taken up with the interests of self, to live upon the breath of others, to be full of resentment for every injury, and watchful to retaliate it; these are the properties and tokens of a little and narrow mind. It requires no energy, no sacrifice, no resolution, to acquire such a disposition; for it is natural to us, and powerful and habitual in the weakest and least respectable characters. But to act uniformly as the servants of God, satisfied with his approbation, under the regulation of his will, and for his sake cheerfully to bear whatever hardships a compliance with duty may expose us to, enduring grief, suffering wrongfully, and acting in the spirit of benevolence and meekness, not only to the good, but also to the froward; this indicates a true nobleness of soul. And to this we are called by our profession: for thus Christ suffered. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet he was reviled, but he reviled not again. He suffered, though innocent; but he threatened not. He was crucified by wicked men: but he prayed for them while they were nailing him to the cross. This was an eminent branch of the mind that was in Christ; and it ought to be a distinguishing feature in the character of his people. For, is the disciple above his Lord? or should the conduct of the disciple contradict that of his Lord? Undoubtedly, so far as we are partakers in the doctrine of his sufferings, and have real fellowship with him in his death, we shall resemble him. If we say we abide in him, we ought to walk, even as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. But they, who, calling themselves Christians, are full of the spirit of self-justification, contention, and complaint, while they profess to believe in him, deny him by their works. The apostles Peter and John, deeply affected by their obligations to him, and by the exquisite pattern of meekness and tenderness which he had set before them, departed from the presence of the council, not swelling with anger, nor hanging down their heads with grief, but rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake, Acts v. 41. And he deserves no less from us than he did from them. It was for us, no less than for them, that he endured reproach, and was content to die as a malefactor, though he was innocent.

SERMON XXV.

MESSIAH RISING FROM THE DEAD.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. PSALM xvi. 10.

THAT the gospel is a divine revelation, may be summarily proved from the character of its Author. If an infidel was so far divested of prejudice and prepossession, as to read the history of Jesus Christ recorded by the evangelists, with attention, and in order to form his judgment of it, simply and candidly, as evidence should appear, I think he must observe many particulars in his spirit and conduct, so very different from the prevailing sentiments of mankind, as to convince him, that man, in his present state, could not possibly have conceived the idea of such a character. Poets and historians have often employed their powers in delineating what appeared to them the great and the excellent in human conduct. But how different are the pictures of their admired heroes, sages, and legislators, from the portrait of the Saviour, as it is drawn with the utmost simplicity by plain unlettered men, who, without art or affectation, only describe what they profess to have seen and heard. I fix at present upon a single consideration, which perhaps cannot be expressed more properly or forcibly, than in the words of an ingenious writer* now living. "He is the only founder of a religion, in the history of mankind, which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and therefore totally unconducive to any worldly purpose whatever. All others, Mahomet, Numa, and even Moses himself, blended their religious institutions with their civil, and by them obtained dominion over their respective peo-

* Jenyn's Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion p. 33, 34. Edit. 3.

ple. But Christ neither aimed at, nor would accept of any such power. He rejected (John xviii. 36), every object which all other men pursue, and made choice of those which others fly from and are afraid of. He refused power, riches, honours, and pleasure; and courted poverty, ignominy, tortures, and death. Many have been the enthusiasts and impostors, who have endeavoured to impose on the world pretended revelations; and some of them, from pride, obstinacy, or principle, have gone so far as to lay down their lives rather than retract: but I defy history to shew one, who ever made his own sufferings and death (John xii. 24, 32, 33.) a necessary part of his original plan, and essential to his mission. This Christ actually did; he foresaw, foretold, declared their necessity, and voluntarily endured them.

The death of our Lord was indeed essential to his plan; as such, it was constantly in his view, and he often spoke of it. Probably it was the whole of his enemies plan; and when they saw him dead, buried, and the sepulchre sealed, they triumphed in their success, and expected to hear of him no more. But the scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day, foretold his resurrection from the dead. The text before us, if there were no other, is a sufficient proof of this, to those who acknowledge the authority of the New Testament, since it is expressly applied to him by the apostles Peter and Paul.

The word in the Hebrew text rendered, in our version, *soul*, is used in different senses. According to the connection in which it stands, it signifies breath, life, soul, or spirit, and sometimes the dead body. The corresponding Greek word, where the apostle quotes this verse (Acts ii. 27), has likewise various significations. And the original words answering to hell, signify both the invisible world, or the state of the dead, and sometimes the grave. Notwithstanding this seeming diversity, we are at no loss here for the precise sense. Scripture is the best interpreter of itself. It is evidently the apostle's design to prove that the psalmist foresaw, and foretold, the resurrection of that body which was taken down dead from the cross, and laid in Joseph's tomb. With this body our Lord arose on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Though Messiah was, for our sakes, treated as a malefactor, all who were immediately concerned in his death were constrained (as we have seen) to declare his innocence. But he was worthy of a more solemn and authoritative justification. Accordingly, "He was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by his resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4.

The apostle expounds "thine Holy One" by the word *flesh*, Acts ii. 29. The human nature, the body formed by the immediate power of God, and born of a virgin, was holy. —It was a "holy thing" (Luke i. 35); perfect and pure, and therefore naturally not mortal, though subject to death for us. In this nature the son of God was charged with sins not his own; he became willingly responsible for many, Matth. xx. 28. Whatever was necessary on the behalf of sinners, to render their forgiveness consistent with the honour of the law, justice, truth, and government of God, was exacted of him, and he performed, and paid to the utmost. He made a full atonement for sin; and though he had power over his life, he hung hour after hour in agonies upon the cross, till he said, "It is finished." Then he resigned his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. He was afterwards buried. But having finished his whole undertaking, destroyed death, and him that had the power of it, and opened the way to the kingdom of heaven, in favour of all who should believe in him, it was not possible that he should be detained in the grave, Acts ii. 24. He had power likewise to resume the life he had laid down for his sheep; and he arose the third day, to exercise all power and authority in heaven and in earth.

His resurrection therefore is the grand principal fact upon which the truth and importance of christianity rests. For though Christ died, if he had not risen again, your faith and our preaching would be in vain. We should be yet in our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 17. And though it was not necessary that his resurrection should have been so publicly known, at the time, as his crucifixion, the evidence for it is strong and decisive. No one point of ancient history is capable of such clear accumulated proof. The apostles frequently saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him, and were assured that it was he by many infallible proofs. They could not be deceived themselves, nor could they have any temptation to deceive others. They declared his resurrection to the very people who put him to death; and they confirmed it by many indisputable miracles, which they performed in his name. They persevered in this testimony, in defiance of the malice of the Jews and the scorn of the Heathens. And by this doctrine of a crucified risen Saviour, though unsupported by the patronage of human power, yea, though opposed by it in every place, they effected that change in the moral world, wherever they went, which the philosophers had not been able to produce, by all their instructions, in a single instance; turning men, whom they found under the strongest prejudices of education and habit, from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and the true God, 1 Thes. i. 9.

But there are proofs of this point which depend not upon arguments or history, which require neither learning, genius, nor study to comprehend; but are equally adapted to persons of all capacities, and in all circumstances. These are the effects which this doctrine pro-

duces on the hearts of those who truly receive it upon the authority of scripture, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to open the eyes of the mind, to take of the things of Jesus (what the scripture reveals of his person, offices, and glory), and to present them, with infallible light and evidence, to those who humbly yield themselves to his teaching. These are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, Phil. iii. 10. It delivers them from guilt and fear, animates them with confidence towards God, weans them from the love and spirit of this evil world, inspires them with great and glorious hopes, and delivers them from the fear of death. They are risen with Christ, by faith, and seek the things which are above (Col. iii. 1), where they know their Lord and Saviour is seated in glory.

I do but touch upon these particulars at present, because the subject will come under our consideration again, from a subsequent passage in the Oratorio. Yet I would not wholly omit leading your reflections to them, though what I briefly offer now, may make what I shall then offer (if my life is prolonged to proceed so far) appear under the disadvantage of a repetition of the same thoughts. Indeed, I know not how to place the proof of this capital doctrine in a light entirely new. The most satisfactory proofs are the most obvious; and it would be folly to substitute weaker in their place for the sake of novelty. But if I should live to resume the subject, some of you who are now present may not live to hear me. So far as concerns the fact, I may hope that the most, or all of you, are believers, and that you are already persuaded in your minds that the Lord is risen indeed! Luke xxiv. 34. I am not preaching to Jews or Mahometans, but to professed christians. But permit me to ask, What influence this truth has upon your hopes, your tempers and your conduct? The powers of darkness know that Christ is risen. They believe, they feel, they tremble. I hope none of you will be content with such a faith as may be found in the fallen angels. As surely as he is risen, he will at length return to judge the world. "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him!" They who are prepared to meet him, who are waiting for him, and who long for his appearance, have reason to rejoice that he once died, and rose again.

Many are the advantages which true christians derive from a spiritual and enlightened knowledge of this doctrine. I will mention a few.

1. As Messiah was delivered, that is delivered up, as a hostage to the demands of justice for our offences; so they know that he was raised again for our justification, Rom. v. 25. By virtue of that union which subsists between Messiah, as the head of his body the church, and all his members; that is, all in the successive ages of the world, who believe in him by a faith of divine operation; he is their legal representative; he and they are considered as one. His sufferings, his whole humiliation and obedience unto death, is so imputed to them, that they thereby are exempted from condemnation; and though not from all sufferings, yet from all that is properly penal, or strictly a punishment. What they suffer is only in a way of discipline or chastisement; and to them a token, not of wrath, but of love. On the other hand, as he by his resurrection was vindicated, justified from the reproaches of his enemies, declared to be the Son of God, with power, and raised to glory; they have fellowship with him herein. God exalted him to glory, and gave him a name above every name, that their faith and hope might be in God, 1 Pet. i. 21. They are not only pardoned, but accepted in the Beloved. And after this state of discipline is ended, they shall be treated as if they had never sinned. For if their sins are sought for in that day, they shall not be found. If any charge should be brought against them, it shall be over-ruled—by this comprehensive unanswerable plea—Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, appears in the presence of God, acknowledges them as his own, and makes intercession for them, Rom. viii. 33, 34. Among men, a criminal may obtain a pardon, may escape the sentence he has deserved, and yet be left in a destitute and miserable condition. But justification is God's manner of pardoning sinners, according to the sovereignty and riches of his grace, in the Son of his love. Those whom he pardons, he also justifies; and whom he justifies, he also glorifies. And even now in this life, though it doth not yet appear what they shall be, though their present privileges are far short of what they hope for, and though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them (1 Cor. ii. 9), yet even now are they the children of God, 1 John iii. 2. And in the midst of their trials and infirmities, though conscious of much defect, and many defilements, in their best hours and services; and though they have not forgotten their iniquities and provocations, when they lived without God in the world; yet, according to the measure of their faith, exercised upon their Saviour, who was raised for their justification, they can rejoice in the knowledge of their acceptance, and rely upon him for their perseverance; and they dare approach the great, holy, and heart-searching God, as to a Father, and pour out their hearts before him, with greater freedom than they can use to their dearest earthly friends. And while they feel and confess themselves unworthy of the smallest of his mercies, they are not afraid to ask for the greatest blessings his bounty can bestow, even to be set as a seal upon his heart, and upon his arm, to be filled

with all his communicable fulness, and to claim him as their everlasting portion.

2. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is a pledge and specimen of that almighty power which is engaged on their behalf, to overcome all the obstacles, difficulties, and enemies they are liable to meet with in their pilgrimage, which threaten to disappoint their hopes, and to prevent them from obtaining their heavenly inheritance. The first communication of a principle of faith and spiritual life to their hearts, whereby they are delivered from the dominion of sin, and from the spirit and love of the world, is attributed to the exceeding greatness of that mighty power (Eph. i. 19—21) which raised the dead body of the Lord from the grave, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and might, and every name that is named. And often the church, collectively, in its militant state, and the individuals which compose it, in their personal concerns, have been brought, to outward appearance, exceeding low. Their enemies have seemed upon the point of triumphing, and saying, Down with them, even to the ground. Such was the boast of the Jewish rulers, when they had slain the Shepherd and dispersed his flock. But it was a short-lived boast. He arose, he ascended, he took possession of his kingdom for himself and for them. He poured out his Holy Spirit upon them, and they went forth preaching his word, which spread like the light of advancing day, from Judea to Samaria, and to the distant parts of the earth. The united force of the powers of hell and earth endeavoured to suppress it, but in vain. Many nations and kingdoms laboured to extirpate the very name of christianity from among men, but they successively perished in the attempt; and the cause against which they raged is still preserved. It is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matth. xvi. 18. Nor can any weapon prosper that is formed against the weakest and meanest of those who sincerely espouse this cause. He, to whom they have devoted and entrusted themselves, has promised that none shall pluck them out of his hands, John x. 28. And while he remains faithful to his word, and able to fulfil it, they shall be safe. Yet they are often pressed above measure, beyond strength, insomuch that they perhaps despair even of life. But when they are at the lowest, the Lord is their helper; and they are taught by the exigencies they pass through, to trust, not in themselves, but in God who raiseth the dead, 2 Cor. i. 9. It is, indeed, the Lord's usual method of training up his people to an habitual dependence upon himself. When he has raised their expectations by his promises, he permits as it were, a temporary death to overcloud their prospect; and that which he has said he will surely do for them, appears for a season, to the judgment of sense, impracticable and hopeless. We might illustrate this point at large from the history of Abraham, of Israel in Egypt, of David, and of the rebuilding of the second temple; and I doubt not but it might be illustrated from the history of many in this assembly. If you have been walking with God for any considerable time, you have met with turns and changes which have almost put you to a stand. You have been, and perhaps now are, in such circumstances, that you feel you have no resource in yourself, and you are sure that the help of man cannot relieve you; but while your help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth (Psal. cxxiv. 8), and while you are warranted to trust in him, who raiseth the dead, you have no just reason to despond. It was a dark season with the disciples, when their Lord, whom they loved, and in whom they trusted, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel (Luke xxiv. 20, 21), was condemned, and put to death. But the appointed third day relieved their fears, and turned their mourning into joy.

3. His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. As certainly as Christ, the first-fruits is risen, so certainly shall they that are Christ's arise at his coming. And each of his people shall arise *aliusque et idem*.[a] Their bodies, though properly their own, shall be changed, and fashioned like unto his glorious body, Phil. iii. 21. This corruptible must put on incorruption; and the body, which is sown in dishonour and weakness, be raised in power and glory. Flesh and blood, in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The body, in this life, is a clog and a burden to those who place their chief happiness in the service of God, and in communion with him. It is a vile body, defiled by sin, and it defiles their best desires and noblest efforts. Even the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which they live, though perfectly pure in itself, is debased, when communicated to them, and exercised under the disadvantages of a sinful nature, as the best wine will receive a taint if poured into a foul vessel. The body, in another view, is a prison, in which the soul, confined and pent up, is limited in its operations, and impeded in its perceptions of divine things. Though we are probably surrounded by the glorious realities of the spiritual world, only short and transient glances of them are discoverable by us; we see but by reflection, and darkly (1 Cor. xiii. 12); we know but in part, and should know nothing of them, but for the good report of the word of God. Farther, the body, as it is the seat of innumerable infirmities, and the medium which connects us with the calamities incident to this mortal state, is often a great hindrance to our most

[a] Another and yet the same.

desirable enjoyments. Pain and sickness call off the attention, and indispose our faculties, when we wish to be most engaged in prayer, detain us from the ordinances, or prevent the pleasure we hope for in waiting upon the Lord in them. But our new, spiritual, and glorified bodies will be free from all defilement or defect. They will be completely qualified to answer the best wishes, and most enlarged activity of the soul. Then, but not till then, we hope to be all eye, all ear, always upon the wing in his service, and perfectly conformed to his image, in light, holiness, and love; for then we shall see him as he is, without any interposing veil or cloud, 1 John iii. 2.

SERMON XXVI.

THE ASCENSION OF MESSIAH TO GLORY

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory. PSALM xxiv. 7—10.

THE institutions of the Levitical law were a shadow or sketch of good things to come. They exhibited a faint and general outline of the mediation and glory of Messiah. They may be compared to the delicate engravings on a seal, the beauty and proportions of which cannot be plainly discerned without the assistance of a glass. The gospel answers to such a glass. Beheld through this medium, the miniature delineations of the law, which to the eye of unassisted, unhumbled reason, appear confused and insignificant, display a precision of arrangement in the parts, and an importance of design in the whole, worthy of the wisdom of their great Author.

From the similarity of the subject of this psalm and the sixty-eighth, it is at least probable that they were both composed upon the same occasion, the removal of the ark of the Lord from its last stationary residence to its fixed abode in Zion, when the king, the priests, the singers, and the harpers, all assisted in the procession, attended by a great concourse of the people. The language of the latter part of the psalm is evidently alternate. And we may conceive, that when the ark approached the tabernacle, the priests and Levites who accompanied it, demanded admittance for it in these words, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," &c. and were answered by those who were waiting within to receive it, "Who is the King of glory?" To which question the proper reply is made, "The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory."

This, if taken according to the letter of the history, was a grand and solemn transaction. But it was at the same time a type of an event unspeakably more glorious. They who know that the scriptures of the Old Testament testify of Christ, that it is he of whom Moses in the Law, David in the Psalms, and all the succeeding prophets, did write, will, I think, agree in considering this passage as referring to his ascension, in the nature in which he suffered, into the true holy place in the heavens, as the representative and high-priest of his people; when, after having by his own self purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then having spoiled principalities and powers, he triumphed over them openly, though not in the view of mortal eyes. He lifted up his hands, and blessed his apostles, and while in this attitude he was parted from them, Luke xxiv. 51. He ascended gently and gradually, and they, admiring and adoring, beheld him with fixed attention, till a cloud concealed him from their sight, Acts i. 9. The pomp and triumph of his ascension were displayed in the invisible world. But this description, accommodated to our apprehensions, is given to assist the faith of his people, that their hearts may be comforted, their meditations enlarged, and that in the exercise of grateful love, they may follow him in their thoughts, ascend with him into the heavenly places, and rejoice in his glory.

We conceive of him, therefore, from this sublime passage, as ascending to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, accompanied with a train of worshipping angels, who demand admittance for Messiah, the Saviour and friend of sinners, as the King of glory. The question is asked, Who is he that claims this honour? An answer is given, asserting his character, his victories, and the justice of his claims—"The Lord of Hosts, the Lord strong in battle, he is the King of glory."

The principal points which offer to our consideration are,

I. His title,—The Lord of hosts.

II. His victories, implied in the expression, —The Lord strong and mighty in battle.

III. His mediatorial title,—The King of glory.

IV. His authoritative entrance into the holy place.

I. Messiah, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, is the Lord of hosts. He is so, if the scripture be true; I attempt no other proof. This is a point not referred to the discussion of our fallen reason, but proposed by the authority of God in his word, as the foundation of our faith and hope. He is the husband of the church, and the husband of the church is the Lord of hosts, Isa. liv. 5.

It was the Lord of hosts, whom Isaiah saw, seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, Isa. vi. 1. The vision filled him with astonishment, and he cried out, "Woe is me, I am undone;—for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." But the apostle John assures us, that when Isaiah said these things, he saw his glory, and spake of him, John xii. 41. This is the title of God in the Old Testament; or, as some chuse to speak, of the Supreme Being. And it is ascribed to Messiah in many places. Therefore, if he were not the Lord of hosts, the scripture would be chargeable with authorising, yea with enjoining idolatry. But he is the true God, and eternal life (1 John v. 20); and they who give him the honour due to his name, have every thing to hope and nothing to fear.

II. He is the Lord strong and mighty in battle. It was in his human nature he engaged in battle with his enemies and ours. But the battle was the Lord's. Therefore, though he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him (Isaiah lxiii. 3), his own arm brought him salvation. He is conqueror of sin, Satan, and death. We were under the power of these; therefore, for our sakes, he engaged in conflict with their united force. He fought, he bled, he died; but in dying, he conquered. The strength of sin is the law; this strength, he subdued, by obeying the precepts of the law, and sustaining the penalty due to our transgressions. He destroyed death, and disarmed it of its sting. He destroyed him that hath the power of death, Satan. He shook, he overturned the foundations of his kingdom, broke open his prison-doors, released his prisoners, delivered the prey out of the hand of the mighty, and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, that is, in his cross, Col. ii. 15. The apostle alludes to the manner of a Roman triumph, in which the conqueror was drawn in a chariot of state, attended by his officers and soldiers; the principal prisoners followed in chains, and all the treasures and trophies gained from the vanquished enemy were displayed to adorn the procession. Thus Messiah subdued the strength and policy of the powers of darkness, in the hour of his lowest humiliation, when he hung and expired upon the cross, and triumphed over them, gloriously leading captivity captive, when he ascended on high, Psal. lxviii. 18. Satan, though still an enemy to his church and cause, is despoiled of his dominion; his power is only permissive, and in his fiercest assaults he is limited by bounds which he cannot pass, by a chain which he cannot break; and all his attempts are controuled and over-ruled, to the furtherance of the cause which he would suppress, and to the good of the persons whom he would worry and destroy. They are made acquainted with his devices, furnished with armour sufficient to repel him, and they fight under encouragement of a sure promise, that the God of peace will shortly and finally bruise Satan under their feet. As Messiah, their King, has conquered for them, so they, in due time, shall be made more than conquerors, by faith in his blood, and in the word of his testimony.

III. The title of King of glory, I understand as peculiarly applicable to him in the character of Mediator. The glory of his divine nature is essential to him. But in consequence of his obedience unto death, he obtained, in the human nature, a name that is above every name, Phil. ii. 9. He suffered as a man, yea, as a malefactor; there was no appearance of glory in that form of a servant which he assumed for our sakes. Though without sin, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, subject to poverty, disgrace, and death; but the same man who was crucified, dead, and buried, received glory and authority at his resurrection, and was highly exalted to the administration of all dominion and government. Perhaps the word *glory* is not easily defined. We conceive it as expressing brightness and splendour. The glory of Solomon was the combined effect of his wisdom, power, and riches; which distinguished him in his character, conduct, and appearance, from other men. The glory of the sun is his effulgence and influence. The word *glory*, when applied to the blessed God, seems to denote that manifestation of himself, by which his intelligent creatures are capable of knowing him; for in himself he is infinite, inaccessible, and incomprehensible, and dwelleth in that light which no man, which no creature, can approach unto, 1 Tim. vi. 16. Of this manifestation there are various degrees. His glory shines in the creation. Not only do the heavens declare it by their immensity (Ps. xix. 1), and furnish us with an idea of his unspeakable greatness, who has sent forth ten thousand worlds, to tell us that he resides above them all; but the smallest of his works, the grass and flowers of the field, and the insects which creep upon the ground (Ps. civ. 24, 25), bear an impression of his wisdom and goodness, an inimitable criterion of his wonder-working hand, which so far displays his glory. To an attentive and discerning mind, his glory shines in his providence; in his preserving the world which he has made; in supplying the various wants of his creatures, and particularly in his moral government of mankind. Here, besides his wisdom, power, and general goodness, we discover some traces of his character as the righteous Judge of the earth. But to our limited capacities and views this glory is obscured by many difficulties. Though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet

clouds and darkness are round about him, Ps. xcvii. 2. By his holy word, his revealed will, we are favoured with a still brighter display of his glory, in the perfections of holiness, justice, truth, and mercy, which fallen man is unable clearly to discover in his works of creation and providence. But chiefly his Son is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. No one hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father (John i. 18), intimately acquainted with his counsels, he hath declared him. This was the great design of his advent, to make God known to man: for as it is life eternal to know the only true God; so he is only to be known in and by Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent (John xvii. 3), and who is the way and the door, and there is no entrance to the knowledge of God but by him. In the person and work of Messiah, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the brightness and harmony of all his attributes, is transcendently revealed. In this sense, he is the Lord, the King of glory. When we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to conceive of him according to the testimony given of him in the scripture, we see the glory of God. Other discoveries of it are but scattered rays and emanations of light; but in Jesus the glory of God resides in its source and fulness, as light in the sun. He is therefore the King of glory.

IV. As the acknowledged King of glory, in the nature of man, he ascended; the everlasting gates unfolded wide, and he entered into the holy place, not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for his people:

1. As their representative. The glory is properly his own, the benefit redounds to his people. Sin had excluded them from the kingdom; but he claimed and took possession in their name, Heb. vi. 20. Hence he is styled their forerunner, because by virtue of their relation to him, and their interest in him, they shall surely follow him. This is the encouragement of believers. He is the head of his body the church: and though the church, while in this world, is in a suffering perilous state; yet as the body of a man is not in danger of drowning while his head is out of the water, so our forerunner and head being in heaven on their behalf, he will assuredly draw all his living members to himself. He has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. And he has stipulated for them, that they shall, each in his appointed time, be with him where he is, to behold his glory, John xvii. 24.

2. As their High-priest and Intercessor. He presents their persons and their prayers acceptable to God. He bears the iniquity of their holy things. With this encouragement, weak and unworthy as they are in themselves, and though their best services are polluted, they find a liberty of access; and because he ever liveth, thus to make intercession for all who come unto God by him (Heb. vii. 25), they know that he is able to save them to the uttermost.

3. Though the heavens must receive and contain his holy human nature till the restitution of all things, he is not unmindful of them in their present circumstances. He is seated upon the throne of universal dominion, and he exercises his authority and rule with an especial view to their welfare. While he pleads for them on high, by the power of his Spirit, he is present with them below. He comforts their hearts, enlivens their assemblies, and manages their concerns. He is their Shepherd, who gives them food, controuls their enemies, revives their fainting spirits, and restores their wanderings, Psal. xxiii. His ear is open to their prayers, his eye is upon them in every situation, and his arm stretched forth for their relief. Therefore, though persecuted, they are not forsaken; though cast down, they are not destroyed. And he has promised that he will not leave them, until he has done all that for them which his word has taught them to hope for; until he has made them victorious over all their enemies, and put the conqueror's song in their mouths, and a crown of life upon their heads.

This High and Holy One, this King of glory, who is seated on the throne of heaven, dwelleth also in the humble and lowly spirit. He thus solemnly claims the throne of the heart of each of his people, which in a state of nature is usurped by self and Satan; and he is thus willingly acknowledged and admitted in the day of his power. Behold! he stands at the door, and knocks (Rev. iii. 20); and because he is as yet unknown, he is for a while rejected. The bolts and bars of prejudice and unbelief withstand his entrance. But when he comes on a purpose of grace, he will take no denial. For a season he waits to be gracious. But he has an appointed hour, when he reveals his great name, and makes the soul sensible who he is! Then the gates of brass and bars of iron are broken before him. His greatness and his goodness, what he is in himself, and what he has done and suffered for sinners, are motives which cannot be resisted when they are truly understood. Satan, who, as the strong one armed, long laboured to hinder him from his rightful possession, is himself dispossessed. The soul laments its former obstinacy, throws down its arms, throws wide open its doors, and bids the King of glory welcome. Then old things pass away, and all things become new. Such was the change the poor man experienced, out of whom Jesus cast a legion of evil spirits. At first, if he could, he would have prevented his kingdom; he was afraid of his deliverer, and said, "I beseech thee torment me not." Mark v. 7. How

wretched was his state then, miserable in himself, and a terror to others! But what a wonderful and happy alteration, when he sat quietly at his Saviour's feet, clothed and in his right mind!

I close the subject with the apostle's inference, "Seeing then that we have so great a high-priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Heb. iv. 14. Let not those who know him be ashamed of their attachment to him. You will not repent in a dying hour, that you once thought too highly of him, or expected too much from him, or devoted yourselves with too much earnestness to his service. Nor yield to unbelief and fear. Though your enemies are many and mighty, and your trials great, greater is he that is with you. If the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty in battle, be for you, who can be against you, so as effectually to harm you? Continue instant in prayer, persevere in well-doing. Our ascended Lord will one day return; and then they who have loved and served, and trusted him here, shall appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 4.

Others, if they can, must prepare to meet him. But alas! how shall they stand before him? Or whither shall they flee from him whose presence filleth the heavens and the earth? Jer. xxiii. 24. Have they an arm like God? or can they thunder with a voice like his? As yet he is proclaimed by the gospel, a Saviour, seated upon a throne of grace, stretching forth the golden sceptre of his love, and inviting sinners to be reconciled. Now is the accepted time. Hereafter he will be seen upon a throne of judgment, to take vengeance of his enemies.

SERMON XXVII.

MESSIAH THE SON OF GOD.

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? HEBREWS, i 5.

THOUGH every part of a revelation from God must of course be equally true, there may be a considerable difference even among truths proposed by the same authority, with respect to their immediate importance. There are fundamental truths, the knowledge of which is essentially necessary to our peace and holiness: and there are others of a secondary nature, which, though very useful in their proper connection, and though the right apprehension of them is greatly conducive to the comfort and establishment of a believer, are not so necessary, but that he may be a true believer before he clearly understands them. Thus our Lord pronounced Peter blessed (Matt. xvi. 17), for his acknowledgment of a truth, which had been revealed to him, not by flesh and blood, but from above, though he was at that time very deficient in doctrinal knowledge. It is not easy to draw the line here, and precisely to distinguish between fundamental and secondary truths; yet some attention to this distinction is expedient; and the want of such attention has greatly contributed to foment and embitter controversies in the Church of Christ; while fallible men, from a mistaken zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, have laboured to enforce all their religious sentiments with an equal and indiscriminate vehemence. It is evident, that the truths essential to the very being of a Christian must be known and experienced by all, of every nation, people, and language, who are taught of God (Is. liv. 13); for they, and they only, are Christians indeed, who are thus taught. And therefore it seems to follow, that no doctrine, however true in itself, which humble and spiritual persons, who study the scriptures with prayer, and really depend upon divine teaching, are not agreed in, can be strictly fundamental. And perhaps the chief part of the apparent diversity of their sentiments does not so often respect the truth itself, as the different acceptation they put upon the words and phrases by which they endeavour to express their meaning to each other.

However, if there be any doctrine fundamental, and necessary to be rightly understood, what the scriptures teach concerning the person of Messiah the Redeemer, must be eminently so. Mistakes upon this point must necessarily be dangerous. It cannot be a question of mere speculation, whether the Saviour be God or a creature; he must either be the one or the other; and the whole frame of our religion is unavoidably dependent upon the judgment we form of him. If he be a man only, or if he be an angel, though of the highest order, and possessed of excellencies peculiar to himself; still, upon the supposition that he is but a creature, he must be infinitely inferior to his Maker, in comparison of whose immensity the difference between an angel and a worm is annihilated. Then all they who pay divine worship to Jesus, who love him above all, trust him with all their concerns for time and eternity, and address him in the language of Thomas, "My Lord, and my God" (John xx. 28), are involved in the gross and heinous crime of idolatry, by ascribing to him that glory which the great God has declared he will not give to another, Is. xlii. 8. On the contrary, if he be God over all blessed for ever, Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, then they who refuse him the honour due unto his name, worship they know not what, John iv. 22. For there is but one God; and, according to this plan, they who know

him not in Christ, know him not at all, but are without God in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. The judgment we form of the Saviour demonstrates likewise how far we know ourselves. For it may be fairly presumed, that they who think a creature capable of making atonement for their sins, or of sustaining the office of Shepherd and bishop of their souls, have too slight thoughts, both of the evil of sin, and of the weakness and wickedness of the human heart.

We ascribe it therefore to the wisdom and goodness of God, that a doctrine so important; the very pillar and ground of truth, is not asserted once or in a few places of scripture only. It does not depend upon texts which require a nice skill in criticism, or a collation of ancient manuscripts, to settle their sense; but, like the blood in the animal economy, it pervades and enlivens the whole system of revelation. The books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, all testify of Him, who was styled the Son of God in so peculiar a sense, that the apostle, in this passage, considers it as a sufficient proof that he is by nature superior to all creatures. The form of the question implies the strongest assertion of this superiority; as if he had said, Conceive of the highest and most exalted of the angels, it would be absurd to suppose that God would say to him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

The verse contains three terms which require explanation, *My Son—Begotten—This day*. But who is sufficient for these things? If I attempt to explain them, I wish to speak with a caution and modesty becoming the sense I ought to have of my own weakness, and to keep upon safe ground; lest, instead of elucidating so sublime a subject, I should darken counsel by words without knowledge. And I know of no safe ground to go upon in these inquiries, but the sure testimony of scripture. It would be to the last degree improper to indulge flights of imagination, or a spirit of curiosity or conjecture upon this occasion. These are the deep things of God, in which, if we have not the guidance of his word and Spirit, we shall certainly bewilder ourselves. Nor would I speak in a positive dogmatizing strain; at the same time I trust the scripture will afford light sufficient to preserve us from a cold and comfortless uncertainty.

The gracious design of God in affording us his holy scripture, is to make us wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. His manner of teaching is therefore accommodated to our circumstances. He instructs us in heavenly things by earthly. And to engage our confidence, to excite our gratitude, to animate us to our duty by the most affecting motives; and that the reverence we owe to his great and glorious Majesty, as our Creator and Legislator, may be combined with love and cheerful dependence, he is pleased to reveal himself by those names which express the nearest relation and endearment amongst ourselves. Thus he condescends to style himself the Father, the Husband, and the Friend of his people. But though in this way we are assisted in forming our conceptions of his love, compassion, and faithfulness, it is obvious that these names, when applied to him, must be understood in a sense agreeable to the perfections of his nature, and in many respects different from the meaning they bear amongst men. And thus, when we are informed that God has a Son, an only Son, an only begotten Son, it is our part to receive his testimony, to admire and adore; and for an explanation adapted to our profit and comfort, we are to consult, not our own preconceived ideas, but the further declarations of his word, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, attending with the simplicity of children to his instructions, and avoiding, as much as possible, those vain reasonings, upon points above our comprehension, which, though flattering to the pride of our hearts, are sure to indispose us for the reception of divine truth. A distinction in the divine nature, inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in terms, must be admitted, upon the testimony and authority of him, who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of his adorable essence. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," 1 John v. 7. To each of these three the perfections of Deity are attributed and ascribed in various parts of scripture. Each of them therefore is God; and yet we are sure, both from scripture and reason, there is, there can be but one God Thus far we can go safely; and that we can go no farther, that our thoughts are lost and overwhelmed, if we attempt to represent to ourselves how or in what manner three are one, and one are three, may be easily accounted for, if any just reason can be given, why a worm cannot comprehend infinity. Let us first, if we can, account for the nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us explain the growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the loadstone. Till we are able to do this, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust. Far from attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to my hearers, I rather wish to leave an impression upon your minds, that it is to us (and perhaps to the highest created intelligences) incomprehensible. But if it be contained in the scripture (which I must leave to your own consciences to determine in the sight of God), it is thereby sufficiently proved, and humble faith requires no other proof.

Allow me to confirm my own sentiments, by an observation of a celebrated French

writer * to the following purport:—"The whole difference, with respect to this subject, between the common people and the learned doctors, is—that while they are both equally ignorant, the ignorance of the people is modest and ingenuous, and they do not blush for being unable to see what God has thought fit to conceal. Whereas the ignorance of their teachers is proud and affected: they have recourse to scholastic distinctions, and abstract reasonings, that they may not be thought upon a level with the vulgar."

The form of baptism prescribed by our Lord for the use of his church, is thus expressed, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matth. xxviii. 19. It is evident, by comparing this sentence with that which I before recited from the Epistle of John, that the Word and the Son are synonymous terms, expressive of the same character. They are both the titles of Messiah. Of him John spoke, when he said, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and of him God the Father said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Had God spoken thus to an angel, it would have been in effect saying, Thou art the Word, which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made. But to which of all the angels would the great God use language like this?

Our Lord, in his conference with Nicodemus, was pleased to say, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. John iii. 16. It was undoubtedly his design, by this expression, to give to Nicodemus, and to us, the highest idea possible of the love of God to sinners. He so loved the world, beyond description or comparison, that he gave his only begotten Son. Surely then the gift spoken of must not be limited to signify the human nature only. This was not all that he gave. The human nature was the medium of the acts and sufferings of Messiah: but he who assumed it was the Word, who was before all, and by whom all things were made. It is true the human nature was given, supernaturally formed by divine power, and born of a virgin. But he who was in the beginning God with God, was given to appear, obey, and suffer, in the nature of man for us, and for our salvation. And to him are ascribed the perfections and attributes of Deity; for which the highest angels are no more capable than the worms which creep upon the earth.

I cannot, therefore, suppose, that the title of Son of God is merely a title of office, or belonging only to the nature which he assumed; but that Messiah is the Son of God, as he is God and man in one person. If the forming a perfect and spotless man, like Adam when he was first created, could have affected our salvation, it would have been a great and undeserved mercy to have vouchsafed the gift; but I think it would not have required such very strong language as the scripture uses in describing the gift of the Son of God. The God-man, the whole person of Christ, was sent, came forth from the Father. The manhood was the offering; but the Word of God, possessed of the perfections of Deity, was the altar necessary to sanctify the gift, and to give a value and efficacy to the atonement.

The term *begotten*, expresses with us the ground of relation between father and son, and upon which an only son is the heir of a father. I feel and confess myself at a loss here I might take up your time, and perhaps conceal my own ignorance, by borrowing from the writings of wiser and better men than myself, a detail of what have been generally reputed the more prevailing orthodox sentiments on this subject. But I dare not go beyond my own ideas. I shall not, therefore, attempt to explain the phrase, *eternal generation*, because I must acknowledge that I do not clearly understand it myself. Long before time began, the purpose of constituting the Mediator between God and sinners was established in the divine counsels. With reference to this, he himself speaks, in the character of the Wisdom of God: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 22, 31. If the Word of God had not engaged, according to an everlasting and sure covenant, to assume our nature, and to accomplish our salvation, before the earth was formed, he would not have appeared afterwards; for we cannot with reason conceive of any new determinations arising in the mind of the infinite God, to whom what we call the past and the future are equally present. In this sense (if the expression be proper to convey such a sense), I can conceive that he was the begotten Son of God from eternity; that is, set up and appointed from eternity for the office, nature, and work, by which, in the fulness of time, he was manifested to men. But if the terms, *begotten*, or *eternal generation*, be used to denote the manner of his eternal existence in Deity, I must be silent. I believe him to be the eternal Son; I believe him to be the eternal God; and I wish not to exercise my thoughts and inquiries more than is needful, in things which are too high for me.

The scripture, in different places, evidently applies the purport of this phrase, "I have begotten thee," to transactions which took place in time, *This day*, and particularly to two principal events.

1. His incarnation.—Thus the angel to

* Abbadie.

Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God," Luke, i. 35. So the apostle, "In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son made of a woman," Gal. iv. 4. And in the passage we are next to consider, "When he bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

2. His resurrection.—To this purpose our text is quoted from the second Psalm. "The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to the children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Acts xiii. 32, 33. And in another place he teaches us, that he who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4.

After all, I would remind you, that the best knowledge of the doctrine of the person of Christ, that which affords life and comfort to the soul, is to be obtained; not so much by inquiry and study on our part, as by a gracious manifestation on his part. Prayer, attention to the great Teacher, a humble perusal of the scripture, and a course of simple obedience to his known will, are the methods which he has prescribed for our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of himself. Thus even babes are made wise; while they who are wise and prudent in their own sight, the more they endeavour to investigate and ascertain the sense of scripture, are frequently involved more and more in perplexity. He has given a promise and direction, for the encouragement of those who sincerely seek him. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." John xiv. 21.

This is he with whom we have to do. In and by this Son of his love, we have access by faith unto God. Unworthy and helpless in ourselves, from hence we derive our plea; here we find a refuge; and on this we rest, and build our hope, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; who is so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they, Heb. i. 4.

SERMON XXVIII.

MESSIAH WORSHIPPED BY ANGELS.

—— Let all the angels of God worship him.
HEBREWS, i 6.

MANY of the Lord's true servants have been in a situation so nearly similar to that of Elijah (1 Kings xix. 10), that like him they have been tempted to think they were left to serve him alone. But God had then a faithful people, and he has so in every age. The preaching of the gospel may be compared to a standard erected, to which they repair, and thereby become known to each other, and more exposed to the notice and observation of the world. But we hope there are always many, who are enlightened by his word and Holy Spirit, and training up in the life of faith and holiness, known and dear to God, though they have little advantage from public ordinances, and perhaps no opportunity of conversing with those who are like-minded with themselves. But even though the number of those who visibly profess the gospel of the grace of God were much smaller than it is, we need not be disheartened. If our sight could pierce into the invisible world, we should be satisfied that there are more with us than against us, 2 Kings vi. 16. And such a power is attributed to faith. It is the evidence of things not seen (Heb. xi. 1), because it receives the testimony of scripture, and rests upon it, as a certainty, and a demonstration; requiring no other proof, either of doctrines or facts, than that they are contained in the sure word of God. True christians therefore are comforted by the assurance they have that their Saviour, the Lord of their hearts, is not so neglected and despised, nor his character so misunderstood and misrepresented in yonder land of light, as in this dark and degenerate world. Though too many here, like Festus, treat it as a matter of great indifference, whether Jesus be dead or alive (Acts xxv. 19); and ask them with a taunt, What is your Beloved more than another beloved? they are not ashamed, for they know whom they have believed; and if men will not join with them in admiring and praising him, they are sure that they have the concurrence of far superior beings. By faith they behold him seated upon a throne of glory, adored by all holy and happy intelligent creatures, whether angels, principalities, powers, or dominions. And when he was upon earth, in a state of humiliation, though despised and rejected of men, he was seen and acknowledged by angels. Their warrant and ours is the same. He is proposed to us as the object of our supreme love and dependence; and as we are enjoined to kiss the Son and to pay him homage, *

when God brought him into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

Though the bringing Messiah, the first or only begotten, into the world, may, as I have observed already, be applied to his incarnation, or to his resurrection, I apprehend it rather designs the whole of his exhibition in the flesh. At his ascension, having finished the work appointed for him to do, he was solemnly invested with authority and glory, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But in his lowest, no less than in his exalted state, the dignity of his divine person is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He was always the proper object of worship. It was agreeable to right, and to the nature of things, and a command worthy of God, that all the angels of God should worship him.

The holy angels that excel in strength (Ps. ciii. 20), always do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. We might be certain, therefore, that this highest and most comprehensive command a creature is capable of receiving from his Creator, is fulfilled by them, even if we had no express information of the fact. But we have repeated assurances to this purpose. Thus Isaiah, when he saw his glory and spake of him, "saw the seraphim standing; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," Is. vi. I see not how the force of the argument arising from this passage, to prove that Messiah is the proper object of the most solemn adoration which creatures can offer to the Most High, can be evaded; unless any were hardy enough to assert, either that the prophet was himself imposed upon, or has imposed upon us, by a false vision; or else that the apostle John (chap. xii. 41) was mistaken when he applied this representation to Jesus Christ. But the apostle likewise had a vision to the same effect, in which, while his people redeemed from the earth by his blood cast their crowns at his feet, the angels were also represented as joining in the chorus of their praises, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12. In brief, he is the Lord of angels. The heavenly host waited upon him, and sung his praises at his birth. Angels ministered unto him in the wilderness, Luke ii. 13, 14. And they are so entirely his servants, that, at his command, they are sent forth to minister unto, and to attend upon his believing people. Are they not all ministering (λειτουργικα, worshipping) spirits, adoring the divine Majesty, yet sent forth to minister (εἰς διακονιαν, for service) to the heirs of salvation? Heb. i. 14 He is likewise the head of angels, though they are not in the same near relation to him as the sinners whom he has redeemed with his blood; for he took not on him their nature. There was no redemption appointed for the angels who kept not their first habitation. But the confirmation of those who continue in holiness and happiness, is in and through him, "For all things both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, are gathered together in one (ἀνακεφαλαιωσασθαι, reduced under one head into one body) in him," Ephes. i. 10. And they are therefore styled, in contradistinction from the others, the Elect angels, 1 Tim. v. 21. He is their life, and strength, and joy, as he is ours, though they cannot sing the whole song of his people. It is appropriate to the saved from amongst men to say, This God shines glorious in our nature! he loved us, and gave himself for us!

Here, then, as I have intimated, is a pattern and encouragement for us. The angels, the whole host of heaven, worship him. He is Lord of all. We in this distant world have heard the report of his glory, have felt our need of such a Saviour, and are, in some degree, witnesses and proofs of his ability and willingness to save. He lived, he died, he rose, he reigns for us. Therefore, humbly depending upon his promised grace, without which we can do nothing, we are resolved, that whatever others do, we must, we will worship him, with the utmost power of our souls. It is our determination and our choice, not only to praise and honour him with our lips, but to devote ourselves to his service, to yield ourselves to his disposal, to entrust our all to his care, and to place our whole happiness in his favour. I hope, in speaking thus, I speak the language of many of your hearts.

Some reflections easily offer from this subject, with which I shall close it.

1. They who love him, may rejoice in the thoughts of his glory. They have deeply sympathized with him, when reading the history of his humiliation and passion. It has not been a light concern to them that he endured agonies, that he was rejected, reviled, scourged, and slain. He who suffered these things was their best friend, their beloved Lord, and he suffered for their sakes. In the glass of his word and by the light of his Holy Spirit, he has been set forth as crucified before their eyes, and they have been crucified with him, and have had fellowship with him in his death. From hence they derive their indignation against sin, and their indifference to the world which treated him thus. But now he is no more a man of sorrows; his head, which was once crowned with thorns, is now crowned with glory; his face, which was defiled with spittle, shines like the sun; his hands, which were manacled, wield the sceptre of universal government; and, instead of being surrounded by insulting men, he is now encircled by adoring angels. Therefore

they rejoice with joy unspeakable, expecting soon to see him as he is, and to be with him for ever, according to the gracious promises he has made them, and the tenor of his prevailing intercession for them.

2. What an honour does his exaltation and glory reflect upon his faithful followers? The world that rejected him pays little regard to them; they are slighted, or scorned, or pitied, and, in proportion as they manifest his spirit, experience a degree of the treatment which he met with; they are accounted visionaries and hypocrites, many of them are great sufferers, and few of them, comparatively, are distinguished among men by abilities, influence, or wealth; they are pilgrims and strangers upon earth; yet this God is their God. He who is worshipped by angels is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 11. They are nearly related to him who sitteth upon the throne; and he is pleased to account them his portion and his jewels. It doth not yet appear what they shall be; but the day is coming when their mourning shall be ended, their characters vindicated, and they shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Lord. They shall stand before him with confidence, and not be ashamed when he appears. Then shall the difference between the righteous and the wicked be clearly discerned. In that day the righteous shall say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. xxv. 9): while the others, however once admired or feared by mortals, the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, no less than those of inferior rank, shall tremble, shall wish in vain to conceal themselves, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, for the great day of his wrath is come," Rev. xvi. 15, 16. In that hour, the striking description in the book of Wisdom (which, though apocryphal, is in this passage quite consonant with the declarations of authentic scripture) will assuredly be realized. "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for; and they repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" Wisd. v. 1—5.

3. We may well admire the condescension of this great King, who humbleth himself even to notice the worship of heaven, that he should look upon the worship of sinful men with acceptance, and permit such worms as we are to take his holy name upon our polluted lips. If we know ourselves, we must be conscious of such defects and defilement attending our best services, as are sufficient to affect us with shame and humiliation. What wanderings of imagination, what risings of evil thoughts, what unavoidable though unallowed workings of self-complacence, mingle with our prayers and praises, and disturb us in our secret retirements, in the public assembly, and even at the table of the Lord! I hope we know enough of this, to be sensible that we need forgiveness, not only for our positive transgressions of his will, but for our sincerest, warmest, and most enlarged attempts to render him the glory due to his name! Yet we are incompetent and partial judges of ourselves; we know but little of the evil of our own hearts, and have but a slight sense of the malignity of that evil which is within our observation. But the Lord searches the heart and the reins; to him all things are naked, without covering, open, without concealment, Heb. iv. 13. He understandeth our thoughts afar of, and beholdeth us exactly as we are. Our dislike of sin is proportionable to our attainments in holiness, which are exceedingly short of the standard. But he is infinitely holy, and therefore evil is unspeakably hateful to him. How vile and abominable therefore must our sins appear in his view! Indeed, if he were strict to mark what is amiss, we could not stand a moment before him, nor would it be agreeable to his majesty and purity to accept any services or prayers at our hands, if we presumed to offer them in our own name. But now there is an atonement provided, and a way of access to a throne of grace, sprinkled with the blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Now that we have an Advocate, Intercessor, and High-Priest to bear the iniquity of our holy things, we are accepted in the Beloved. Now the great and holy God vouchsafes to admit such sinners into communion with himself. He invites us to draw near with boldness; and because of ourselves we know not how to pray as we ought (Rom. viii. 26), he favours us with the influence of his Holy Spirit. It is a great instance of the power of faith, that, remembering what we have been, and feeling what we are, and having some right apprehension of him with whom we have to do, we are enabled to approach him with confidence, and to open our hearts to him with greater liberty than we can use to our dearest earthly friends. His people know by many infallible proofs, that his presence is with them in their secret retirements, and in their public assemblies, according to his promise. He hears and answers their prayers, he revives their spirits,

he renews their strength; he gives them reason to say, that a day in his courts is better than a thousand of the world's days. Such are their expectations, and such, in the exercise of faith, is their experience. They worship him whom the angels worship; and they know, that, unworthy and defective as they are, their worship is no less acceptable to him, than that of the angels in glory, by virtue of their relation to him, who is Lord both of angels and men.

4. Hence we may infer the necessity of that change of heart, which the scripture expresses by a new birth, a new life, a new creation, and other representations, which denote it can be effected only by divine power. Till we are the subjects of this operation, we are incapable of enjoying, or even of seeing the kingdom of God, John iii. 3. Though to outward appearance the congregation before me seem all to be serious and attentive, as if engaged in the same design, and animated with the same desire and hope, he to whom our hearts are known, doubtless observes a great difference. Some of you, through custom, or a regard to your connections, brings you hither, yet must be sensible that this is not your chosen ground, and that these are not the subjects which give you pleasure. We preach Christ Jesus and him crucified—Christ Jesus the Lord. The Lord sees, though I cannot, the indisposition of your hearts towards him. You are soon weary and uneasy; and you wish to throw the blame of your uneasiness upon the preacher. You regard his method, his manner, his expressions, with no friendly intention, in hopes of noticing something that may seem to justify your dislike; and a sermon, not very long in itself, is to you very tedious. We wish well to your souls, we study to find out acceptable words; for though we dare not trifle with or flatter you, we are unwilling to give you just offence. But if you will be faithful to yourselves, you may perceive that it is not so much the length or the manner, as the subject of our sermons that disgusts you. You would, perhaps, hear with more attention and patience, did we speak less of him whom the angels worship. There are assemblies more suited to your taste, and there are public speakers to whom you can probably afford a willing ear, for a much longer time than we detain you; because there you are at home. You are of the world, and you love the world. The amusements, the business, the converse, and the customs of the world, suit your inclination. But here you are not, if I may so speak, in your proper element: and yet it may be, there are persons in the same seat with you, who think themselves happy to hear what you hear with indifference or disgust. If you knew your state as a sinner, your need of a Saviour, and the excellency and glory of the Saviour whom we preach to you, you likewise would be pleased; and a preacher of very moderate powers would fix your attention, and gain your esteem, if he preached this gospel. But what ideas do you form of a future state? Surely you cannot suppose, that in the eternal world you will meet with any of the poor expedients you have recourse to now, for filling up your time, which otherwise would hang heavy upon your hands. To attempt a detail of the round of vanities which constitute a worldly life, would be unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. Let it suffice, that death will remove you from them all. If they are now necessary to what you account your happiness, must you not of course be miserable without them? If you believe you shall exist hereafter, do you not desire heaven? But such a heaven as the word of God describes could not afford you happiness, unless your mind be previously changed and disposed to relish it. Neither the employment nor the company of heaven would be pleasing to you. It is a state where all the inhabitants unite in admiring and adoring him who died upon the cross. If this subject is displeasing to you here, it would be much more so there. Heaven itself would be a hell to an unhumbled, an unholy soul. Consider this seriously, while there is time to seek his face; and tremble at the thoughts of being cut off by death in your present state, insensible as you are of who he is, and what he has done for sinners. May he enlighten your understanding, and enable you to see the things pertaining to your true peace, before they are for ever hidden from your eyes!

SERMON XXIX.

GIFTS RECEIVED FOR THE REBELLIOUS.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them PSAL. lxviii. 18.

WHEN Joseph exchanged a prison for the chief honour and government of Egypt (Gen. xlv. 4, 5), the advantage of his exaltation was felt by those who little deserved it. His brethren hated, and had conspired to kill him. And though he was preserved from death, they were permitted to sell him for a bond-servant. He owed his servitude, imprisonment, and sufferings to them; and they were afterwards indebted to him for their lives, subsistence, honour, and comfort; God in a wonderful manner over-ruling their evil conduct for future good to themselves. Thus Jesus was despised, rejected, and sold; and he was actually slain. But he arose and ascended The man of sorrows took possession of the

throne of glory; and not for himself only. His honour is the source of happiness to those who were once his enemies, and rebellious against him. For the sake of such he lived and died. For their sakes he lives and reigns. He fought, conquered, and triumphed over their enemies. As their representative, he received gifts to bestow upon them: such gifts as their necessities required, derived from the relation he was pleased to stand in to them, and from the value and dignity of his engagements on their behalf: such gifts as he alone could communicate, and which alone could restore them to the favour of God, and revive his image in their hearts; so as to make it suitable to his holiness and truth, for the Lord God to return to his polluted temples, and to dwell in them and among them.

I observed in a former discourse, that this psalm and the twenty-fourth were probably composed and first published on the memorable occasion, when David, having obtained the victory over his numerous enemies, and settled his kingdom in peace, removed the ark, which till then had no fixed residence, into Zion. The apostle's application of this passage (Eph. iv. 8), authorizes us to consider that transaction as typical of our Lord's ascension. Jesus is the true ark. The holy law of God was in his heart; his obedience unto death was fully commensurate to the demands of the law (Rom. iii. 25); as the mercy-seat, or propitiation, which covered the ark, was exactly equal to its dimensions. He who had thus obeyed on earth, ascended on high, the everlasting gates unfolded, and he entered into the holy place not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. In this state he is highly exalted upon the throne of glory, and administers all power in heaven and in earth. From hence is the honour, safety, and happiness of those who believe in him. They have nothing to plead for themselves. But unworthy as they are, he is not ashamed to own them; and he assures them, that all he did, and that all he has received, so far as they are capable of sharing in it, is for them. The clauses, as they lie in the text, suggest a convenient method for our meditations, and will lead me briefly to consider four points;

His *ascension*—his *victories*—the *gifts* he received for men—and the great *end* for which he bestows them.

I. His ascension—"Thou hast ascended on high."—God formed man originally for himself, and gave him an answerable capacity, so that no inferior good can satisfy and fill his mind. Man was likewise, by the constitution and will of his Maker, immortal, provided he persevered in obedience. But sin degraded and ruined him, shut the gates of paradise and the gates of heaven against him. Man destroyed himself; but wisdom and mercy interposed for his recovery. A promise was given of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, defeat his policy, destroy his power, and repair the mischiefs he had introduced by sin. Messiah fulfilled this promise. And when he had finished all that was appointed for him on earth, as the second Adam, the head and representative of his people, he ascended on high, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. As an illustrious proof to the universe, that God is reconciled; that there is forgiveness with him for sinners who implore his mercy; one in our nature, and on our behalf, has taken possession of the kingdom. The series of texts in this part of the Oratorio recals this subject frequently to our thoughts; nor can we think of it too often. It is the foundation of our hopes, the source of our sublimest joys, and the sufficient, the only sufficient answer to all the suggestions by which guilt, fear, unbelief, and Satan, fight against our peace. Surrounded as we are with enemies and difficulties, we plead against every accusation and threatening, that our Head is in heaven; we have an advocate with the Father, a High-Priest upon the throne, who, because he ever liveth to make intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. This is all our plea, nor do we desire any other. His ascension on high, is a sure pledge that his servants shall follow him, John xii. 26. And even at present, by faith they ascend and are seated with him in the heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6. They behold invisibles with the eye of their mind; they realize the glorious scene, from which they are separated by the veil of flesh and blood. They know that, even now, day and night, day without night, myriads of golden harps and happy voices resound his praise. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man who once hung dead and forsaken upon the cross, is now the Lord of glory. In the thought of his glory they greatly rejoice, because they love him, and because they expect shortly to be with him.

II. His victories—"Thou hast led captivity captive." The expression is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, so that captivity itself is taken captive. The spirit and force of it is destroyed; and his people, when released by him, and walking in his ways, have no more to apprehend from those whose captives they were, than a conqueror has to fear from a prisoner in chains. The energy of the phrase is not unlike that of the apostle, which we are hereafter to consider, "death is swallowed up in victory." Man by nature is a captive, in a state of confinement and bondage, from which he cannot escape by any address or effort of his own.

He is a captive to sin: a sinful state is a state of bondage; and this, notwithstanding the sinner is a willing captive, speaks swelling words of vanity, and boasts of liberty

while he is the servant, the slave of corruption. He is not always, and in every sense, a willing captive. Conscience sometimes remonstrates, fills him with fears and forebodings, which make him struggle to be free. And there are many sins, which, besides being offences against the law of God, are directly contrary to the sinner's present interest and welfare; and would be so upon his own plan, and if he was wholly his own master, and had no account to render of his conduct. Persons enslaved to habits of lewdness or drunkenness, need not be told from the pulpit, that the courses they pursue are injurious to their health, their business, or substance, their reputation, and their peace. They know it and feel it, without a monitor. There are seasons, when the ill consequences they bring upon themselves, make them sick of the drudgery, and excite some efforts towards a reform. But in vain. The next return of temptation bears down all their resolutions like a torrent, and, after every attempt to amend, they usually become worse than before. For none can escape, unless the Son makes them free. His grace can overcome the most obstinate habits of licentiousness, and implant the contrary habits of purity and temperance. But they who are not delivered by him must die in their chains.

III. The gifts he received for men—"Thou hast received gifts, even for the rebellious." To bestow gifts upon the miserable is bounty; but to bestow them upon rebels, is grace. The greatness of the gifts contrasted with the characters of those who receive them, displays the exceeding riches of the Redeemer's grace. He came to save, not the unhappy only, but the ungodly. He gives pardon, peace, and eternal life, to his enemies; whose minds are so entirely alienated from him, that until he makes them willing in the day of his power, their minds are determined against accepting any favour from him. They live long in contempt of the law and authority of God; and though justly obnoxious to his displeasure, while left to themselves, they despise and reject the proposals of his mercy. If they sometimes acknowledge themselves to be sinners, they still presume that they are able to procure his favour by their own performances. They strangely imagine they have a sufficient ground of hope, so long as it appears to themselves that they are not altogether so bad as others. And when, by the gospel, the Lord treats them as sinners already justly condemned by the tenor of his holy laws, and informs them of the exigency of their case; that nothing less than the resources of his infinite wisdom, and the most expensive exertion of his unspeakable love, can possibly save them from destruction; the pride of their hearts rises against his declarations. His wisdom, in their view, is folly; and his love provokes their enmity and scorn. He says of Messiah, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" but the language of their heart is, "We will not have him to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. They revile and oppose the messengers of his grace, account them enemies, charge them as troublers of their peace, and as those who turn the world upside down: and, when not restrained by the providence of God, inflict upon them, besides, reproaches, stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death. If their dearest friends, and those who are connected with them by the nearest ties of relation, submit to the testimony of God, and yield themselves to the appointed Saviour, they are treated as apostates from the general opinion. This defection from the common cause, is often sufficient to cancel the strongest obligations, to dissolve the closest intimacy, to raise a person foes in his own household, and to excite envy, hatred and malice, in those who once professed esteem and love. Can the spirit of rebellion rise higher, than when they who have insulted the authority, defied the power, and resisted the government and will of the great God, proceed at length to trample upon his tenders of reconciliation, and to affront him in that concern which of all others is dearest to him, the glory of his grace in the person of his Son? Yet this is no exaggerated representation. Such is the disposition of the heart of man towards God; such were some of us; and such, I fear, some of us are to this hour. I do not say, that this enmity of the carnal mind acts, in every person who is not subject to the grace of God, with equal rage and violence. In a land of light, liberty, and civilization, like ours, a variety of circumstances may concur to set bounds to its exercise; education, a natural gentleness of temper, and even interest, may keep it within limits of decorum, especially towards some individuals; but I affirm, or rather the scriptures declare, that enmity against God, a disaffection to his gospel, no less than to his law, and a dislike to those who profess and obey the truth, are principles deeply rooted in our nature, as fallen; and, however they may seem dormant in some persons for a season, would operate vigorously, if circumstances were so to alter as to afford a fair occasion. For, as of old, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit (Gal. iv. 29), even so it is now. And it is still as true as in the apostle's days, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. iii. 12), shall, in one degree or form or other, suffer persecution from those who will not.

Thus men are characterized in the word of God: Rebels and enemies, having a neck of iron, to denote their obstinacy; a brow of brass (Isa. xlviii. 4), to express their insolence and presumption; and a heart of stone (Ezekiel, xxxvi. 26), insensible to the softest methods of persuasion, incapable of receiving tender kind, and generous impressions, though they are

wooed and besought by the consideration of the mercies of God, of the dying agonies of Messiah, unless that mighty power be displayed in their favour, which brought forth streams of water from the rock in the wilderness.

Messiah died, arose, and ascended on high, that he might receive gifts for rebels of this spirit and disposition. The one grand gift I shall specify, is, indeed, comprehensive of every other good,—the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said to his sorrowing disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. Soon after his ascension, this promise was fulfilled. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 4, 37), and the people who had slain the Lord were pricked to the heart, repented of their sin, received faith in him whom they had pierced, and experienced joy and peace in believing.

That the gospel is preached upon earth by a succession of ministers called and furnished for that service, and that the gospel when preached is not rejected by all, as it is by many, is wholly to be ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, whose office and covenant-engagement it is, to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John xvi. 9, 11), and to glorify Messiah. He opens the eyes of the understanding, subdues the stubborn will, softens, or rather removes the heart of stone, and gives a feeling tender heart, a heart of flesh. Then the rebels relent and sue for mercy; then they obtain faith, repentance, remission, a full and free salvation, and all the gifts which Messiah has received for them.

IV. His ultimate design in favour of rebellious men, the great final cause of his mediation, and particularly of his bestowing on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, is, "that the Lord God may dwell among them." Man was created in the image of God, who formed him for himself. But he sinned and was forsaken. God withdrew his light and love from him, and man sunk into darkness and misery. Sin and Satan took possession of the heart, which was originally designed to be the temple of the living God. But the Lord had a merciful purpose, to return in a way worthy of his perfections. Without him, the souls of men, and the whole human race, as to their proper happiness, are like what the earth would be without the sun, dark, cold, fruitless, and comfortless. But the knowledge of Messiah, like the sun, enlightens the world and the heart.

When in the day of his power, by the revelation of his light and love, he destroys the dominion of sin, and dispossesses Satan, he reclaims his own, and takes possession for himself. The heart, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and anointed with the holy unction, becomes a consecrated temple of the Holy Ghost. This persuasion, though now by many, who have not renounced the name of christian, deemed the essence of enthusiasm, was once thought essential to christianity; so that the apostle speaks of it as an obvious incontrovertible fact, with which no true christian could be unacquainted. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" 2 Cor. vi. 19. Again, he speaks of Christ dwelling in the heart, Eph. iii. 17. "Christ in you the hope of glory," Colos. i. 27. And in another place, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16), agreeably to his promise by the prophets. He liveth in them, as the principle of their life, wisdom, and power; therefore the apostle says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. There is a mutual indwelling between the Lord and his people; they in him as the branch in the vine, and he in them as the sap in the branch; he in them as in his temples, they in him as in their strong tower of defence. And from hence we infer the duration of their life of grace, that it shall continue and spring up into everlasting life, since it is properly not their own but his, and since he has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

He dwells likewise among his people in their collective capacity. His whole church, comprising all the members of his mystical body, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, form a building fitly framed together, a palace, a holy temple for the Lord, the great King. He dwelleth likewise in every particular society who walk by his rule, and adorn the profession of his truth by a conversation becoming the gospel. He is a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them, Zech. ii. 5, 10. When they meet together in his name, he is there. He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. It is his presence that gives life and efficacy to all his ordinances, and communicates a power to his word, by which the minds of his worshipping people are enlightened, strengthened, healed, and comforted. Here he manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world, and they can adopt the words of the psalmist, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." To his presence they owe their peace and increase, their union and protection. And if he withdraws, Ichabod may be written upon their solemn assemblies (1 Sam. iv. 21); for even his own appointments can afford them neither profit nor pleasure, unless they are animated by his glory. Their graces languish, their harmony is interrupted, strifes and dissensions take place, evil roots of bitterness spring up to trouble and defile them (Hebrews, xii. 15); men arise from among themselves, speaking perverse things, and

fierce wolves break in, not sparing the flock (Acts xx. 29, 30), if the good Shepherd suspends his influence and presence.

I trust he dwells and walks in the midst of us. He is here as an observer, and as a gracious benefactor. He sees who draw near him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him; and he likewise takes notice of them that fear and love him, and who esteem the light of his countenance to be better than life. The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth likewise with those that are of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive and bless them, Isa. lvii. 15.

SERMON XXX.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it (or *of the preachers*). PSALM lxviii. 11.

PERHAPS no one psalm has given greater exercise to the skill and the patience of commentators and critics than the sixty-eighth. I suppose the difficulties do not properly belong to the psalm, but arise from our ignorance of various circumstances to which the psalmist alludes, which probably were at that time generally known and understood. The first verse is the same with the stated form of benediction which was used whenever the ark of the Lord set forward while Israel sojourned in the wilderness (Numb. x. 35); which confirms the prevailing opinion, that the psalm was primarily designed as an act of thanksgiving, to accompany the removal of the ark to Zion, by David. The seventh and eighth verses are repeated, with little variation, from the song of Deborah, Judges v. 4, 5. The leading scope of the whole appears to be, first, a recapitulation of God's gracious dealing with Israel, and of the great things he had done for them, from the time he delivered them from their bondage in Egypt, and then a transition, in the spirit of prophecy, to the far greater things he would do for his people, under and by the gospel dispensation, in consequence of Messiah's exaltation to receive gifts for rebellious men. This verse, though the particular occasion is not specified, probably refers to some season of deliverance or victory, when the women, according to the custom of the nation, assembled to praise the Lord, with timbrels, songs, and dances, Exod. xv. The songs and responses of Miriam and her companions, and of the women who welcomed Saul and David after the defeat of the Philistine (1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7), I have formerly mentioned as instances. The word which is rendered *Those who published* or *preached*, being expressed with a feminine termination, leads the mind to this sense. But we are not necessarily confined to it; for the word rendered *preacher* in the book of Ecclesiastes, is likewise in the feminine form, though we are sure the person intended by it was Solomon.

However, this passage is properly introduced in the Messiah, and in its proper place, immediately after the view given of our Saviour's triumphant ascension, as it leads us to consider the first visible effect of that great event; for soon afterwards, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the Lord gave the word, Acts ii. 1—4. The Holy Spirit, the precious gift, which Jesus had received for rebellious men, descended with visible emblems, and a powerful energy, and inspired and qualified his disciples for the great work of establishing and spreading his spiritual kingdom. From that hour, great was the number of the preachers, and great was the success and efficacy of their mission. So that in a few years the gospel spread like the light, from Jerusalem, through all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And he who said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20), has, by the same Spirit, perpetuated his word, and a succession of preachers, to our time, and has promised to perpetuate and work by the same means, till time shall be no more.

My text, therefore, if not a direct prophecy of the publication of the gospel, is at least a fit motto to a discourse on this very important subject. We may consider it in two senses, which, though something different, are equally agreeable to the words before us, and to the general tenor of the scripture.

I. That the message is the Lord's.—He gave the word, and prescribed to his servants the subject matter of their preaching.

II. That the messengers employed are called and sent forth by him.—The Lord gave the word or command; in consequence of which word, the number of preachers was great, as when in the beginning he said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

I. The Lord gave the word which the multitude of preachers went forth to publish. His merciful design was great,—to deliver sinners from bondage, misery and death: and to bless them with liberty, life, and peace. But they are by nature rebellious and obstinate, and must be made willing. He only can subdue their prejudices, and soften their spirits; and he has promised to display his power in their favour by a certain mean of his own appointment, and we cannot expect that he will do it in any other way. This mean is the gospel, which for its admirable suitableness and efficacy, is commended to us as his wisdom and his power, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. He has given it for this purpose, and his blessing makes it

successful. He has said concerning it, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Is. lv. 10, 11. It has been confirmed by the experience of ages, that no mean but this can produce the desirable effect. It is confirmed by observation in the present day. If the wisdom of man, if learning, if oratory, if animated descriptions of the beauty of virtue, and pathetic persuasions to the practice of it, could reform, we should be a reformed people. But alas! this is only to oppose a mound of sand to the violence of a flood. Notwithstanding many ingenious sermons and treatises upon this plan are admired and praised, wickedness prevails and triumphs. They have little influence upon the conduct of civil life; and I may boldly say, no influence to inspire the heart with the love and peace of God, and to bring it into a habit of subjection to his will and command. Nothing will do this but the gospel, the word which the Lord has given. This alone shews the evil of sin in its true light, affords a solid ground for the hope of mercy, and furnishes those motives which alone are sufficient to break the force of the temptations and difficulties with which we have to conflict. When this word is simply and cordially received, an immediate and wonderful change takes place. The sinner abandons his false hopes and vain pursuits, is freed from his former slavery to the love of the world and the fear of man, and becomes the willing servant of him who redeemed him with his own blood.

But we are sometimes asked, what we understand by the gospel? The use of the term in a restrained sense, so as to imply there are but few comparatively who preach it, is deemed invidious and assuming; and it is supposed by many, that a sermon, if delivered from a pulpit, and if the text be taken from the Bible, must of course be the gospel. It is undeniable, however, that there are a variety of different and opposite sentiments delivered from pulpits; and surely the gospel cannot be opposite, contrary, yea contradictory to itself! It is a mournful consideration, that multitudes of people are not qualified to judge of this point. Not properly for want of ability, for many of them are persons of good sense and discernment, and can judge and talk well upon other subjects; but for want of attention. Their application is engrossed by the demands of business or pleasure, and they have neither leisure nor taste for a careful perusal of the scriptures, nor for the examination of religious sentiments. If the language and elocution of the preacher be good, and if there be no close and painful address to the conscience, they are satisfied. The apostle Paul undoubtedly preached the gospel; and he tells us himself that he preached Christ crucified; he preached Christ, as appointed of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. He preached the cross of Christ (Gal. vi. 14), he gloried in it, and he determined to glory in nothing else. The gospel treats all mankind as already in a state of condemnation; it declares their utter inability to save or help themselves; and it gives assurance of pardon and salvation to all who believe in the Son of God. That they may be encouraged and enabled to believe, it describes the dignity of his person, the necessity and greatness of his sufferings, the completeness of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession—his love, authority, power, and faithfulness. These truths revealed and applied to a guilty conscience, by the power of the Holy Spirit, produce faith. The sinner perceives the sufficiency and excellency of such a Saviour, commits himself to his compassion and care, and renounces every other hope and service. He looks to the Saviour by the eye of his mind, with desire and admiration, and derives life from his death, healing from his wounds, as the Israelites, when wounded, were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent. And not only is the conscience relieved by this knowledge of Christ crucified—the understanding is likewise enlightened, the judgment is formed, the affections regulated and directed by it. Then old things pass away, all becomes new. The love of sin departs, and the future life is devoted to him, who therefore died and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living, Rom. xiv. 9.

There is likewise a certain energy or power which accompanies the gospel when it is truly preached, which sufficiently characterizes and distinguishes it from all other religious schemes and systems. Our Lord, during his personal ministry, frequently gave proofs that he knew the heart of man. When Zaccheus thought himself unknown and unseen, he called him by his name, Luke xix. 5. He reminded Nathanael of what had passed in secret under the fig-tree (John i. 48): and by a few words brought to the remembrance of the woman of Samaria all that she had done in her life, John iv. 29. A similar effect accompanies the preaching of his gospel to this day. The gospel is preached, when they who are present find the secrets of their hearts are made manifest; when the preacher, who perhaps never saw them before, reminds them of what they have done, or said, or thought, possibly of things transacted long ago, and almost forgotten by themselves; and likewise describes the very feelings of their hearts while he is speaking to them. It is usually in this way that conviction of sin first takes place; and

in this way, that a convinced burdened sinner meets with seasonable support and direction, so exactly suited to his case, that he almost thinks the preacher is speaking to none but himself. No preachers but those who speak in conformity to the word which the Lord gave, have this power over the heart and conscience.

II. It is owing to the word, the appointment, and power of God, that any persons are induced or enabled to preach this gospel. Men may, indeed, assume the office of a preacher upon other grounds; there are too many who do. But though they speak in the name of the Lord, and as his ministers, if he has not sent them, they cannot declare his message in such a manner as to make full proof of their ministry, 2 Tim. iv. 5. They may profit themselves, according to their low views, and may obtain such honours and emoluments as the world can give; but they have not the honour which cometh from God only. They are not wise to win souls, Prov. xi. 30. They have no testimony in the consciences of their hearers. They may deliver truths occasionally, which are valuable and useful in their proper places; but for want of knowing how to connect them with what the apostle styles, The truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. iv. 21), they are unable either to break the hard heart, or to heal the wounded spirit. The thoughtless are not alarmed, nor the ignorant instructed. The wicked go on in their evil ways—

> The hungry sheep look up but are not fed.

Nay, we see, in fact, though a few persons may still be found, who place their religion in a dull, unmeaning attendance upon the form of public worship, upon any form in which it was their lot to be educated; yet, in many places, the bulk of the people, by their contempt of the Lord's day, and by their customary manner of absenting themselves from their appointed teachers, give sufficient proof that they have neither found, nor expect to find, so much benefit or pleasure, as to make them think it worth their while to attend them.

It will appear to competent judges, that faithful preachers are called and prepared for their office by the Lord, the head of the church, and not by human institutions, from the following considerations:

1. That the gospel cannot be rightly understood but by divine teaching. The natural man, however distinguished by abilities or literature, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. ii. 14); nay, he cannot even discern them. He may, indeed, know something of the gospel system, considered as a matter of science; he may know how to defend the outworks of Christianity, and be master of the external evidences for its truth; and he may espouse orthodox opinions, and be a successful champion in the field of controversy. But the inward power and life, that which constitutes the essential difference of true religion, is no less remote from his apprehension, than the idea of light is from a person born blind. This he can only learn by experience. The first lesson received and learnt by those who are taught of God, is a conviction of guilt, ignorance, and misery—and then they begin to learn the importance, necessity, and design of the gospel. The man who is thus instructed, if the Lord be pleased to call him to the office of teaching others, will in due time proceed to deliver to the people what he has himself learnt; not with hesitation, uncertainty, or indifference, not what he has acquired by hearsay or from books, but he has the witness in himself, 1 John v. 10. His heart teacheth his mouth, Prov. xvi. 23. He believes, therefore he speaks. He simply and freely declares that which he himself has known, and seen, and tasted of the word of life. And speaking from the fulness of his heart, with an earnestness inspired by the greatness and importance of his subject, he speaks to the heart and feelings of his hearers, and impresses a manifestation of the truth upon their minds.

2. That the desire of preaching this gospel, when known, if it be a right desire, must likewise be given. If a man should attempt the service, without counting the cost, or considering the consequences, he will most probably be disgusted and wearied. And if he seriously and properly considers before-hand what he is about to engage in, and has a due sense of his own weakness, he will tremble at the prospect, and direct his thoughts to some other employment, unless his call and support be from on high. What courage, wisdom, meekness, and zeal, appear requisite, in the view of such an inquirer, to qualify a man for preaching, and continuing to preach, a doctrine so unpleasing to the world, as the doctrine of the cross has in all ages proved! What opposition, and snares, and difficulties, what fightings from without, what fears within, may be expected! Surely he will be ready to shrink back, and to say, Who is sufficient for these things? But the Lord by the constraining sense of his love, and by giving a deep impression of the worth of souls, and by exciting in the mind a dependence upon his all-sufficiency, can and does encourage those whom he calls and chuses, to serve him in the gospel. In themselves they are quite unequal to what is before them, but they obey his voice; they trust in his promises for guidance and protection, and are not disappointed. We are therefore directed to pray, that the Lord of the harvest would send, or rather (according to the force of the Greek word) thrust forth labourers into his harvest, Matt. ix. 38.

3. That only he who sends forth his ministers can enable them to persevere. It is a service of continual exertion and expense, and requires a continual supply. The opposition

of the world, and the power of temptation, acting upon the weakness and depravity of the heart, would quickly prevail against the best ministers, if they were left to carry on the warfare at their own charges. They are at times, yea frequently, in situations and circumstances which teach them feelingly the meaning of the apostle's words, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life," 2 Cor. i. 8. Besides the trials incidental to the christian profession, which they are exposed to in common with others, they have many which are peculiar to their calling as preachers of the gospel. Their chief pre-eminence over christians in private life is a painful one; they have the honour of bearing a double share of the heat and burden of the day, and of standing in the foremost ranks of the battle, to provoke and receive the fiercest assaults of the enemy. Their only resource and hope is in the faithfulness and compassion of their Lord, under whose banner and eye they fight, and who has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

4. That the Lord only can give success to their endeavours. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but there is no increase unless he affords a blessing. 1 Cor. iii. 6. It is at least a presumptive proof, that he has called a man to preach, if he owns his labours, since he has not promised to own any but those whom he sends.

We must however allow, and observe, that to preach salvation to others, and even to be instrumental in saving souls, will not absolutely prove that the preacher is in a state of salvation himself; we hope it is generally so; but there are exceptions and instances, which should awaken our circumspection, and keep us constantly looking to the Lord in a spirit of humility and dependence. There was a Judas among the apostles; and we are assured that at the last day, some, yea many, will plead having done great things in the name of Christ, whom he will notwithstanding disown, as workers of iniquity, Matth. vii. 22, 23. Even the apostle Paul was impressed by this thought, and he has recorded the improvement he made of it for our instruction: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

SERMON XXXI.

THE GOSPEL-MESSAGE, GLAD TIDINGS.

(As it is written), How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ROMANS, x. 15.

THE account which the apostle Paul gives of his first reception among the Galatians (Gal. iv. 15), exemplifies the truth of this passage. He found them in a state of ignorance and misery; alienated from God, and enslaved to the blind and comfortless superstitions of idolatry. His preaching, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, had a great and marvellous effect. His principal subject was the death of Jesus, who had lately suffered as a malefactor at Jerusalem. Though the transaction was past, and the scene at a considerable distance, yet by the manner of his representation, the fact was realized to their minds; and they could have been no more affected, had they been actually upon the spot at the time. Jesus Christ was exhibited to them as crucified before their eyes, Gal. iii. 1. By the same divine energy they were instructed in the knowledge of his character, who he was, and why he suffered; and likewise understood their own need of such a Saviour. Thus they hearkened to him, not with the indifference of the Athenians, but with application of all that he said to themselves. They heard, they believed, and they rejoiced. The apostle reminds them, that they had not received a cold speculative doctrine, but such a one as imparted a blessedness to them. This, indeed, many of them afterwards lost, when they were unhappily seduced by false teachers. But for a time the knowledge of a Saviour so exactly suited to their circumstances made them happy; and while they were so, they felt very strong emotions of gratitude and esteem for the messenger who brought them these glad tidings, though he was by many accounted and treated as the off-scouring and filth of all things, the Galatians received him as an angel of God, and attended to him, as if the Lord, who sent him, had spoken to them in person. And although he had till then been an entire stranger to them, his message opened a way to their hearts, and they gave him every testimony of the most cordial friendship; insomuch that, had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.

Thus, likewise, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, the consequence was great joy in that city, Acts viii. 8. But when the gospel is thus gladly received, there must be a suitable disposition of mind. It is sent to the poor. It is designed to heal the broken

hearted, to deliver the captives, and to give sight to the blind, Luke iv. 18. And therefore they who are well satisfied with themselves, who say, We see, and who boast of their freedom, cannot possibly judge either of the truth or of the importance of the gospel doctrine. As the Lord waters the earth with a profusion worthy of his magnificence and bounty, and does not confine his rain to cultivated soils; so the good seed of his word often falls upon the highway, upon the rocks, and among thorns (Luke viii. 13—15); but it is only productive upon the good ground of an honest and good heart. Not that any human heart is truly good by nature, but some are prepared for the reception of the truth. And this preparation is the first effect of the word, when it brings forth fruit unto life eternal. It undeceives those who were for a time deluded with vain hopes, and convinces them that they are poor, and blind, and wretched, and helpless. Then they gladly accept the gospel of peace, and the message is to them as life from the dead.

The passage in the prophet Isaiah, from which my text is quoted, is very animated and descriptive. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" Isa. lii. 7. Imagine a distressed people, at the will and disposal of a conqueror, who was justly offended with them, and under an anxious trembling uncertainty how he would treat them: If an authorized messenger should inform them, that, instead of the punishment they deserved, the king vouchsafed them a free pardon, was ready to receive them with favour, and to bestow honours and possessions upon all who applied to him, without excepting the most guilty, even the ringleaders in rebellion: how welcome would this messenger be to them! This, indeed, is beyond the manner of men. No earthly monarch has either magnanimity to make, or power to make good, so gracious and unlimited a proclamation to a whole nation of rebels. But this is the manner of the great God. Such an act of grace is the gospel. An act of grace to sinners, yet founded in righteousness, and displaying the glory of his justice equally with the riches of mercy. For it is founded on the mediation of the Son of his love, and procured by his blood. The messengers of this grace are thus welcomed and honoured by those who believe their report, and are esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 13. We may observe,

I. The message of the gospel is glad tidings of peace and good things.

II. The messengers, or preachers, find ample reward in their success and acceptance.

I. According to the Hebrew idiom (which frequently obtains in the New Testament), all good things are comprised in the term *peace*. They are eminently comprised in the peace of the gospel; for it is the peace of God which passeth understanding. It brings a blessed assurance, that Messiah has made peace by the blood of his cross. They who believe this good report, derive from it peace of conscience; and are enabled to say, Though thou wert justly angry, thine anger is turned away, Isa. xii. 1. It dispels their fears and forebodings, and inspires them with liberty to come to God as children; consequently, on their parts, alienation and enmity cease. They no longer conceive of him as an avenging judge or a hard master. They no longer dispute his authority, nor repine at his appointments. They become a willing people. They yield themselves to him. They cultivate peace in all their connections. The forgiveness and bounty they have received, teaches them likewise to forgive, and be kind as they have opportunity. They possess such good things as the world can neither give nor take away: Communion with God, grace, wisdom, and power. They serve him with their all, and are supported by his good Spirit in every trying circumstance; and they have a good hope, which enables them to rejoice in tribulation, and to smile in death.

If the wickedness and obstinacy of mankind were not so strongly described and exemplified in the Bible, and if we could forget that this obstinate perverseness was once our own character, we should find it difficult to conceive, after we understand the nature and design of the gospel, upon what grounds a scheme so wisely and completely adapted to relieve men from misery, to promote their present comfort, and to secure their future happiness, should, instead of being received with thankfulness, generally excite contempt and opposition. Can the world afford a peace which shall abide and cheer the heart under all the changing circumstances incident to us in this mortal state? Can it propose any good, any honours, profit, or pleasures, worthy of being compared with the honour which cometh from God only, the light of his countenance, and the riches of glory? Can the influence of the world preserve us from trouble, or support us under it, or deliver us out of it? Has it any charms capable of soothing the anguish of a wounded conscience? Can it obviate the stroke, or overcome the fear of death? Or can it inspire the soul with confidence and joy, in the contemplation of that approaching day, when we must all appear before the tribunal of the supreme Judge? That the world, if we possessed the whole of it, cannot do these things for us, is acknowledged by many, and felt by all. The gospel proposes a cordial for every care, a balm for every wound; and none who make the experiment of its efficacy are disappointed. In other cases, they who have received great obligations may speak highly of their benefactor; and they who beyond hope, have been recovered from a dangerous malady, may commend the skill and

care of their physician, to those who are labouring under the same disease, without giving offence. But if they who have obtained life and peace by believing in Jesus, proclaim his goodness, and point him out to their fellow-sinners as the only Physician and Saviour of souls, their testimony is charged with folly, and their endeavours rejected with scorn, as officious and impertinent. Men, while left to themselves, will not come to him that they may have life. The God of this world so works upon their prejudices, pride, and passions, that though the light of truth shines around them like the light of the sun, the eyes of their mind are blinded, and they are pleased with their darkness, and unwilling to see, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Hence of the few, comparatively, who are favoured with a clear and faithful dispensation of the gospel, the greater part, it is to be feared, reject the counsel of God against themselves; and his ministers in all ages, have had cause to adopt the prophet's complaint, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" Is. liii. 1. It would be thus universally, if the Lord, who gave the word, and who sends forth the preachers, had not engaged his promise, that they shall not labour wholly in vain, nor spend their strength for nought. He prepares a people to serve him, and to show forth his praise. And while some mock, others refuse to hear (Acts xvii. 32), and others, with an indolent indifference, are content to hear again and again, there are others whose hearts are opened to receive, the truth in the love of it. They hear and believe to everlasting life.

II. The instruments of this happy change find their reward in their work. It being owned to the salvation of a few, they are compensated for all the opposition they meet with from the many; and this on a twofold account:

First, and principally, for the love they bear to their Lord, and to souls for his sake.

To see his name made precious to the hearts of sinners; to see those who were blind admiring his excellency; to see those who were so far off from God brought so nigh; to see those who were wretched rejoicing in his goodness; to hear those whose lips were filled with folly, falsehood, or blasphemy, proclaiming his praise; such salutary effects of their ministry fill them likewise with praise and joy: and when their hearers express the power and spirit of the gospel in their tempers and conduct, they can say, "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord," 1 Thess. iii. 8.

A secondary satisfaction, which of itself is sufficient to make them full amends for all the scorn of an unkind world, is the share they have in the affections of the people who are thus benefited by their ministry. This is the popularity which alone is desirable. It would be a small thing to be able merely to hold a multitude by the ears: but to be approved and loved by those to whom the Lord has made them useful, is a high honour, and a source of sublime pleasure. When Peter and John (Acts iii. 11) had healed the lame man, I doubt not but they were more affected by the simple honest testimony of his gratitude, than by the unmeaning wonder of all the surrounding multitude. If a true servant of the Lord, by any advantage of abilities or elocution, should attach a large congregation to a personal regard for himself, should be admired and beloved by them, and yet discover no attachment in them to the Saviour whom he preaches, their partiality to him would give him but little pleasure. He would be more ready to weep over them, than to rejoice in the preference they gave him. For he seeks not their applause, but their edification; and he aims not to promote his own glory, but the glory of him who sent him, John vi. 18. He is indeed, glad to see them attending upon the means which God has promised to bless. But the faithfulness and closeness of his addresses to their consciences, by which many are sooner or later disgusted and driven away, is a proof that he does not want them merely to make up a number about him. They who make the office of a preacher an occasion whereby to promote their own interest or reputation, may, perhaps, obtain the reward they seek; but it is such a reward as can only satisfy a weak and mercenary mind; and from him, whose name they prostitute, they can only expect the reward assigned to hypocrites and unbelievers.

But true christians will, and do, set a high value upon the ministers who, with simplicity and godly sincerity, preach the gospel of peace, in such a manner as to evidence that they are influenced by a regard to the glory of God, and to the good of souls; and they give proof of their affection in more ways than by speaking well of them.

1. By the satisfaction with which they accept a faithful ministry, as a balance to the trials they meet with in common life. There are many poor and many afflicted people, who have little comfort in the things of this life, and in their own houses. Some are pinched by penury, and some who live in opulence, yet dwell, as the psalmist expresses it (Psal. lvii. 4), in the fire and among lions. They suffer not less than the others, though in a different way, from the unkindness and opposition of their nearest connections. But in the house of God, they are satisfied and comforted. And, according to the words of the prophet, though the Lord is pleased to give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction (Is. xxx. 20), yet since their teachers are not removed into corners, but they have free access to the preaching of his word, and can attend upon a minister who careth for their souls, and meets them, when they are weary, with a word in season, they hear their

appointed cross with cheerfulness. Though they have much bitterness of heart at home, known only to themselves, they have a pleasure which a stranger intermeddleth not with, when they go up to the house of the Lord. But if the instrument, who is the messenger of God to them for good, be removed, and they are deprived of these opportunities, the regard they bore him is manifested by their sorrow for losing him; which often affects them more sensibly than all their other griefs.

2. By taking kindly and in good part his most searching discourses in public, or even his reproofs and admonitions in private, if needful. For they know that he watches over their souls, as one who must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17. And because they love him, they do all in their power to make the service a pleasure and not a grief to him. They do not wish him to speak smooth things to them, or to entertain them with the discussion of points in which they have little concern, but to hear that which is suitable to their own case and circumstances. And if the preacher discovers to them, that through inadvertence, they have allowed themselves in any wrong practice, or have lived in the omission of any duty, instead of being offended with his plain dealing, they love him the better for it.

3. By their tenderness and sympathy with him in all his exercises; and by their care, according to their ability, to make his situation comfortable, and to avoid every thing that might give him just occasion for complaint or grief. The trials of a faithful minister are neither few nor small. His work is great; he is sure to meet with enemies and discouragements. He travails in birth for souls (Gal. iv. 19); he is pained by the opposition of the wicked, the inconstancy of the wavering, and the inconsistency of many who make profession of the truth. He feels many anxieties for those who are enquiring the way to the kingdom, lest they should be turned aside and hindered; and too often the hopes he had indulged, of some who discovered a concern for religion, are disappointed. His inward conflicts are many. He often walks in much weakness, fear, and trembling, 1 Cor. ii. 3. When he considers what he is, what he ought to be, and what he has to do, he is often distressed, afraid, and ashamed, and unable to speak. His path is spread with snares, his heart wounded with temptations. But his judicious hearers have some knowledge of what he endures for their sakes and in their service; they love him, pity him, and pray for him, and their kind attention comforts him under all his tribulations.

Sometimes their regard is rather improperly expressed; as when they not only value his ministry, but hold him so highly a favourite, that they can hardly hear another. A preference is certainly due to the person who is made especially useful; but no faithful preacher should be slighted. Though gifts and abilities are not equal in all, yet they are all the Lord's messengers, and entitled to regard.

Again, it is an improper regard, if they yield themselves implicitly to him, to be governed by his will. So far as we speak agreeably to the scripture, which is the rule and standard of faith and practice both to you and to us, we are authorized to require your attention and obedience; but you are not bound to receive what we propose merely upon our own authority. There are those who account ignorance the mother of devotion, and expect an implicit compliance with their injunctions, by virtue of their office and personal influence. But a true minister will account it his honour and pleasure to preach to an enlightened people who love and study the Bible, and, like the Bereans, search the scriptures (Acts xvii. 11), to see if things are so as represented. We have no dominion over your faith, but wish to be helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. i. 24. Nor do we pretend to dominion over your purses, though we are to remind you of the apostle's charge, "To do good, and to communicate, forget not," Hebrews, xiii. 16.

How much are they to be pitied, who account that word of grace a burden, which to those who receive it with thankfulness, proves the balm and cordial of life! Take heed how you hear. If the gospel is not made to you a savour of life, it will be a savour of death. It will aggravate your guilt and condemnation, and leave you utterly hopeless and inexcusable. If you continue impenitent and obstinate, the hour is coming when you will wish you had never heard of the name of Jesus. It had been better for you never to have been born, or to have lived and died among the savage Indians, or to have been an idiot or a lunatic to the end of your days, than to have lived where the doctrine of salvation was published in your hearing, if you finally reject the counsel of God against yourselves!

SERMON XXXII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

——*Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* ROMANS, x. 18.

THE heavens declare the glory of God, Psal. xix. 1. The grandeur of the arch over our heads, the number and lustre of the stars, the beauty of the light, the splendour of the sun, the regular succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, are such proofs of infinite wisdom and power, that the scripture attributes to them a voice, a universal language, intelligible to all mankind, accommo

dated to every capacity. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. The combined effect of the visible works of the great Architect, presses a declaration upon the ear of reason—"The hand that made us is divine." We must, however, understand it of the ear of right reason. The loudest voice is unnoticed by the deaf. Thus it ought to be, and thus it would be, if man were indeed a rational creature, as he proudly boasts himself. That the fact in general is otherwise; that the bulk of mankind are no more affected by the works of God than the beasts of the field; that the philosophers who profess to study them, so faintly discern, so frequently deny the great First Cause of all, is a proof that sin has darkened and depraved the noblest powers of the soul, and degraded man into the state of an inattentive idiot. However, the evidence, if it does not excite his admiration and praise, is abundantly sufficient to convict him of stupidity and ingratitude, and to leave him without excuse, Rom. i. 20.

This passage, taken from that sublime ode of David, the nineteenth psalm, is applied by the apostle to illustrate the character and the progress of the still more wonderful display of the divine perfections, which God has made known by the glorious gospel. A variety of truths shine (like stars in the firmament) in the system of revelation. But principally Jesus, the Sun of truth and righteousness, the source of spiritual light and life, answers to the description there given of the material sun. "His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from his heat," Psal. xix. 6.

But the fulfilment of the promises respecting Messiah's kingdom is progressive. So far as this prophecy has been accomplished, the arm of the Lord has been revealed. It is his doing and may justly be marvellous in our eyes. The truth of the prophecy will be proved by its final completion, which, though not likely to take place in our time, we may be assured that it cannot fail, for the Lord hath spoken it. And besides, we have a sufficient pledge and security for the whole, in what he has already done. It was not necessary for the fulfilling of this prophecy, nor consistent with the tenor of many other prophecies, that the spread of the gospel should be instantaneous and universal on its first publication. Messiah is to rule in the midst of his enemies till the appointed season, when all enemies shall be subdued under his feet. The gospel, the rod of his power, is so admirably adapted to the necessities of mankind, that the obstructions it has met with must be ascribed to their wickedness and obstinacy. Not that they could resist the will of God. Had he intended to give it universal success from the beginning, the event would have been answerable. But it was his pleasure to conduct the dispensation of it, so as, on the one hand, to display his sovereignty, wisdom, and power, and on the other, to afford a full proof of the depravity and alienation of the heart of man. This point is so much misunderstood and misrepresented, that though it is attended with great difficulties, especially if we give way to vain reasonings upon it, I shall venture, in the present discourse, to offer a few thoughts towards clearing the subject, and vindicating (if the very attempt be not presumptuous) the ways of God to man.

When the Sun of righteousness, after a long night of darkness, arose upon the world, there appeared a strong probability that the prophecies concerning the extent of his vital influence, from east to west, from pole to pole, would soon be completely realized. In a very short space he was known and adored by multitudes, through the greatest part of the Roman empire, and beyond its limits. But, perhaps, for about seventeen hundred years since that period, the boundaries of his kingdom, though they have been altered, have not been much enlarged. If he has since in some measure enlightened the more western parts of the globe, the eastern regions, which once rejoiced in his light, are now overwhelmed with gross Mahommedan darkness. And if we were capable of investigating the state of the world at this day, we should probably find, that five out of six of the human race now living, never so much as heard of the name of Jesus as a Saviour. There is reason to fear likewise, that in the nations who professedly call him Lord, and are not unwilling to be themselves called Christians, a greater proportion than five out of six, are no less strangers to his power and grace, than the Mahommedans who reject him, or the Heathens who never heard of him.

There is not perhaps a darker chapter in the book of divine providence, nor a meditation which calls for a more absolute subjection and submission to the holy will and unsearchable wisdom of God, than this. The first spread of the gospel proved it to be a divine expedient, fully capable of producing all the great purposes which the prophets had foretold, and which the state of the world required. It reconciled men to God, to themselves, and to each other. It subdued their passions, regulated their affections, freed them from the guilt and bondage of sin, from the love of the world, and from the fear of death. Wherever the doctrine of the cross was preached, it produced that salutary change of conduct which philosophy had long attempted in vain; and raised men to that life of communion with God, of which philosophers had no conception. Such was the bright morning of the gospel-day. But in time, yea, in a little time, dark clouds obscured its light; its progress was impeded, and in a manner stopped. On one

hand, the profession and name of the gospel gave occasion to mischiefs and abominations which had been unknown among the Heathens; so that the part of the world which received the name of Christendom, was little distinguished from the rest, in a religious view, but by a fierce and rancorous superstition, which tyrannized over the consciences, liberties, and the lives of men. On the other hand, as I have observed, the very name of Christianity was restrained to a small portion of the earth; many nations have not heard of it to this day; and many who once professed it have renounced it long ago.

Thus the fact stands. We cannot deny it. But how shall we account for it? Infidels and petty reasoners think they here find an invincible objection against the truth. They say, "If the gospel you speak of be so salutary and necessary, if it be indeed the greatest effect of the divine goodness, why has not God, who is the common Father of mankind, afforded it to all the nations of the earth? and why is it restrained to so few?" But I think we may retort the question, and let them who propose it give such an answer (if they can) as shall not amount to a confession of the obstinacy and ungrateful folly of mankind. When the world saw the happy tendency and effects of this gospel in the age of the apostles, why did they not universally receive it? We know that when the use of the mariner's compass, the art of printing, and many other inventions that might be named, were discovered in one country, they were presently adopted by the surrounding civilized nations. Even the recent attempts to venture through the air with a balloon, hazardous as they certainly are, and insignificant with respect to real usefulness, are likely in a little time not only to engage the notice, but to excite the imitation of Europe. Why then was the gospel, the most beneficial and important discovery the world has been favoured with, the only one that has been treated with general contempt? Certainly our Lord has assigned the true reason, "Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 19. They hate the light, they will not come to it, nor will they permit it to come to them if they can possibly prevent it. This glorious gospel of the blessed God has been and still is shunned and dreaded, and every human precaution and exertion has been employed to withstand and suppress it, as though, like the pestilence, it was baneful to the welfare of society. May we not say, speaking after the manner of men, that the Lord has done enough to confirm his own express and solemn declaration, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live! Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He has raised up a succession of faithful servants, from age to age, to publish these glad tidings. The reception they have met with, not only from the Heathens, but from nominal christians, is well known to those who are acquainted with ecclesiastical history, which contains little more than a detail of the arts and cruelties by which the civil and ecclesiastical powers of almost every kingdom, where the gospel has been known, have endeavoured to suppress it.

The nation of Great Britain, in particular, has but little right to ask, Why the gospel of Christ has been spread no farther among the Heathen? The providence of God has favoured us with peculiar advantages for this service. Our arms and commerce have opened us a way to the most distant parts of the globe; and of late years, the enterprising spirit of our navigators has added almost a new world to the discoveries of former times. How far have our plans been formed with a subserviency to the great design of evangelizing the Heathen? How much have we done to promote it in Asia, where our influence and opportunities have been the greatest? What impression of the name and spirit of christianity has our conduct given to the inhabitants of India? But I forbear—Facts are too well known to need recital; too glaring to need a comment. It is true, we have an incorporated society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, and we hear of missionaries; but of the good effects of their missions, as at present conducted we neither hear, nor expect to hear. While America was ours, the efforts of a few individuals from the northern provinces in the last and present century, were not without success. But I fear this is all the honour we can claim. Some good has been done by the Danish mission to Tranquebar, but I believe our influence in it has been rather nominal than effective. The extent and effects of the labours of the *Unitas Fratrum* *, compared with their circumstances and resources, must not be omitted on this occasion. They doubtless excite admiration, and thankfulness to God, in every serious mind acquainted with the subject. But excepting in these instances, I believe the Heathens have derived but little knowledge of the gospel from their connections with Christendom for some ages past. And I think none of the commercial nations in Europe have had the propagation of Christianity less at heart than the English. What obligations the natives of Africa are under to us, for instruction or example, may be estimated, in part, by a cursory survey of the state of our West-India Islands!

That the gospel is so little known in the world, and so little received where it is known, cannot be so properly ascribed to the will of God, as to the wickedness and wilfulness of men. Undoubtedly he to whom all things are possible, who has absolute power over the

* More generally known amongst us by the name of the Brethren, or Moravians.

hearts of his creatures, could make a way for the universal reception of it. And we trust that in his own time he will do so. But power is not his only attribute. It would be rash and absurd to suppose that the great God will do every thing that he can do. We are sure that he will do what is worthy of himself; but of this his own infinite wisdom is the only competent judge. What is becoming of his perfections and holy government, we can know no farther than he is pleased to inform us. But it certainly becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, when we contemplate his conduct; or, if we do speak, to adopt the apostle's language, "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever," Rom. xi. 36.

However, my text is fulfilling, and shall be fulfilled. This joyful sound has already been spread far abroad, in defiance of all attempts to restrain it. Multitudes from age to age have heard it, and found it to be the power of God unto salvation. And it would be easy to prove, if it belonged to my subject, that the superior advantages of civilization which Christendom enjoys are remotely owing to the knowledge of revelation. To this must be chiefly ascribed the different state of this island from what it was when visited by Julius Cæsar. Yea, our modern philosophers would make but a poor figure, were they despoiled of all the plumes they have borrowed from the book they affect to despise. Farther, the purpose of God to save sinners by faith in his beloved Son, is the primary ground of that patience and long-suffering which he still exercises towards such a world as this. And some imperfect traces of this design transmitted by tradition, are probably to be found though wofully disfigured among every nation and people under heaven which have at least preserved, in a degree, the notices of right and wrong, and some faint warnings of conscience, in the most savage state of human nature. But, were it not for reasons connected with the designs of his mercy, we can scarcely conceive that the holy God would have perpetuated the race of mankind in a state of rebellion and enmity against his government. Or if he had permitted them to multiply, and left them wholly and absolutely to themselves, without interposing some restraints upon their depravity, I believe the inhabitants of the earth would have been no better than incarnate fiends.

The prophecies, both of the Old and New Testament, encourage us to hope for a time, when the light of gospel-truth will break forth with meridian brightness, the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all flesh shall see his salvation. As a pledge of this, and of the truth of the whole scripture, we have what may be called a standing miracle continually before our eyes; I mean the state of the Jews, who, though dispersed far and wide among many nations, are everywhere preserved a distinct and separate people. The history of the world affords no other instance of the like kind. The great monarchies, by which they were successively conquered and scattered, have successively perished. Only the names of them remain. But the people whom they despised, and endeavoured to exterminate, subsist to this day; and though sifted like corn over the earth, and apparently forsaken of God, are still preserved by his wonderful providence, unaffected by the changes and customs around them; still tenacious of the law of Moses, though the observance of it is rendered impracticable. Many days, many ages they have lived, as the prophets foretold they should, without a temple, without sacrifice or priest, Hos. iii. 4, 5. As yet, many heathen nations are permitted to walk in their own ways. But at length the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved, Rom. xi. 25, 26. The revolutions and commotions in kingdoms and nations, which astonish and perplex politicians, are all bringing forward this great event. The plan of the human drama, to us, who only see a single scene, is dark and intricate; but the catastrophe is approaching; and in the close of the whole, the manifold wisdom of God will be admired and adored, and all holy and happy intelligences will acknowledge with transport, He has done all things well.

But the point I am chiefly to press upon my hearers, is, that this word of salvation is sent to you, Acts xiii. 26. How the great Judge will deal with the Heathens, who were never favoured with it, he has not seen fit distinctly to inform us. But thus far he has assured us, that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who have the privilege of knowing the gospel, if they reject it, Matth. xi. 20—24. To them much is given, and of them much will be required. Do not think ministers assuming if they magnify their office. We have no reason to think highly of ourselves. Nor would you be blameable for disregarding us if we spoke in our own names. But if we preach the truth of the gospel in simplicity and sincerity, then we speak in the name of the Lord, and demand your attention. Do you ask for our authority and commission? Ask your own consciences. If, like Felix, when you mean only to indulge your curiosity by hearing us, you are constrained to tremble (Acts xxiv. 25); if we force upon your mind the remembrance of what you have said or done; if our message makes you uneasy and dissatisfied with yourselves; if you cannot avoid feeling at some times the truth of our principles, and the necessity of the

change we would press upon you; if, though you have been repeatedly displeased and offended with what you hear, and, perhaps, have gone away purposing or threatening that you would hear it no more, you still appear amongst us—then you have a sufficient proof, that the ministers are sent and authorized to speak to you, and we take your consciences to witness that we preach the truth.

SERMON XXXIII.

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH UNREASONABLE.

Why do the Heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed; saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. PSALM ii. 1—3.

IT is generally admitted, that the institutes of Christianity, as contained in the New Testament, do at least exhibit a beautiful and salutary system of morals; and that a sincere compliance with the precepts of our Lord and his apostles would have a good effect upon society. Few infidels have ventured to contradict the common sense of mankind so far as to deny this. Nor can it be denied, that the author of this institution, if we judge by the history and character given of him by the evangelists, exemplified, in the highest perfection, by his own conduct, the precepts which he enjoined to his followers. While he lived as a man amongst men, the tenor of his behaviour was such as became the friend of mankind. Though he submitted to a low estate, and often suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness, we do not read of his having wrought a single miracle merely for his own relief. But the wants and calamities of others continually excited his compassion and engaged his assistance. He gave sight to the blind, health to the sick, and sometimes wiped away the tears of mourners, by restoring their dead to life. He endured hunger himself, but once and again provided food for multitudes, lest they, having nothing to eat, should have fainted by the way. Nor did he confine his acts of benevolence to his followers, but was easy of access, and granted the request of all indiscriminately who applied to him. He went about doing good (Acts x. 38), and often put himself in the way of those who would not otherwise have known him. And though he was opposed, calumniated, and laughed to scorn, he continued unwearied and determined in the same cause, bestowing benefits on all around him, as occasions offered, and returning good for evil. May we not with reason ask, Why then did Jews and Heathens, priests and people, scribes and Sadducees, rage so furiously against him, who did nothing amiss, who did all things well? Why did persons of the most opposite interests, parties, and sentiments, who could agree in nothing else, so cordially agree in opposing Messiah?

The gospel breathes the spirit of its great Author, and has a direct tendency to make men happy and useful. Wherever it was published, in the first age, among the Heathens, many of them turned from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God. It taught and enabled them to renounce ungodliness and wordly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus ii. 12); and it still produces the same effects. The world now bears the name of Christian; but under this new and honourable name it retains the same spirit as formerly. Many who are called Christians, are no less under the power of evil tempers and evil habits, than the Heathens to whom the apostles preached. But where the gospel of the grace of God reaches the heart, a real and observable change is produced. The profane person learns to fear an oath, the libertine is reclaimed, the drunkard becomes sober, and the miser kind. Wherever the truth of the gospel is known and received, instances may be found of persons who were a terror and a burden to their families, being delivered from the stings of a guilty conscience, from the dominion of headstrong passions, from the slavery of habitual wickedness, and made peaceful, useful, and exemplary members of society, by what the apostle calls the preaching of the cross. And we challenge history to shew that an abiding, consistent reformation was ever effected by any other doctrine, in a single province, or city, or village, or even in a single family.

What then shall we say of that zeal which kindled the fire of persecution against our Lord and his apostles, and his followers, through a succession of ages? What is the common principle, the bond of union, which at this day connects people who differ so widely in other respects, and points their displeasure from all sides against this one object? In a former discourse,* I briefly mentioned the principal grounds of that dislike which the Jews manifested to Messiah's personal ministry, and I observed, that they are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man, and therefore not peculiar to any one age or nation. The gospel always did, and always will produce the same happy change in those who receive it, and provoke the same opposition and resentment in those who do not. The actings will be different as circumstances vary, but the principle is universally the same. In this island, which the good providence of God has distinguished by many signal and peculiar favours, the spirit of our constitution

* Sermon xvii.

and government is friendly to liberty of conscience and the rights of private judgment; so that our religious profession does not expose us to the penalties of fire and sword, stripes or tortures, imprisonment or banishment. Such trials have been the lot of our forefathers, when the servants of God, under the names of Gospellers or Puritans, were treated as heretics of the worst sort. We are bound to acknowledge with thankfulness the blessings of religious and civil liberty which we enjoy. But the world at large around us is not more favourably disposed to the grace and rule of Messiah's kingdom, than it was in the days of Heathen and Popish darkness. The tongue at least is unrestrained, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. The gospel offends the pride of men, by considering them all on a level, as sinners in the sight of God; and by proposing only one method of salvation, without admitting any difference of plea or character. It offends them likewise by its strictness. Like Herod, they might perhaps consent to do many things (Mark vi. 20), if they were left at liberty to please themselves in others, in which, though expressly contrary to the will of God, they will not submit to be controlled; and therefore they are much displeased with the gospel, which, by affording no allowance or connivance to the least known sin, but prescribing a rule of universal holiness, crosses their inclinations and favourite interests. When Paul preached at Ephesus, Demetrius and his companions perceived that their craft was in danger. This was the real cause of their anger, but they were ashamed to avow it; and therefore their ostensible reason for opposing him was of a religious kind (Acts xix. 28), and they professed a great concern for the honour of Diana. Few perhaps would have given themselves much trouble to promote or preserve the gain of the craftsmen; but a pretended regard for the worship which had been long established, was a popular topic, which wrought powerfully upon the superstition of the ignorant multitude, and thousands were presently induced to join with them in the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The like arts are still practised with the like success. The same secret motives are disguised by the same plausible pretences. The deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart appears in no one instance more plainly than in the cavils which are repeated and multiplied against the grace of the gospel. When we preach a free salvation by faith in Jesus, and propose his obedience unto death as the sure and only ground of acceptance with God; when we say, in the words of the apostle, to the vilest of sinners who feel the burden, and fear the consequences of their sins, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31), an alarm is raised, and a concern pretended for the interests of morality. The doctrine of salvation by faith only, is charged with opening a door, a floodgate for licentiousness, and it is supposed, that if this doctrine be true, people may live as they please, and still comfort themselves with the expectation of heaven at last. Considering our natural propensity to trust in ourselves that we are righteous, I do not wonder that persons who are comparatively sober and decent should speak thus, while they are ignorant of the strictness of the holy law of God, and of the depravity of their own hearts. But I sometimes wonder that they are not a little disconcerted by the characters of many (so different from what they suppose their own to be) who join with them in the objections they make. For in this point, with the sober and decent, the licentious and profligate readily concur; and whoremongers, adulterers, drunkards, and profane swearers, almost equal them in gravely expressing their apprehensions that the doctrine of salvation by grace will prove very unfavourable to the practice of good works. How very remarkable is this, that the virtuous and the vile, the most respectable and the most infamous people, should so frequently agree in sentiment, and unite in opposing the gospel, professedly from the same motive. But thus it was at the commencement of Messiah's kingdom: kings, rulers, priests, and people, all conspired and raged against him. Herod and Pilate, the Jewish elders and the Roman soldiers, the Pharisees and the Sadducees thus differed, and thus agreed. They hated each other till he appeared; but their greater common hatred to him made them act in concert, and they suspended their mutual animosity, that they might combine to destroy him.

I may seem to have digressed from the immediate scope of my text, but I judge it proper to bring the subject home to ourselves. If I confined myself to prove that the enemies of our Lord, when he was upon earth, were very unreasonable and unjust in treating him as they did, I should have an easy task, and I suppose, the ready assent of all my hearers. But there may be persons present, who, though they little suspect themselves, are equally misled by prejudices; and under a semblance of zeal for a form of godliness, oppose the truth and power of it, upon the same principles and in the same spirit as the Jews and Heathens did of old. The Jews who condemned Messiah to death, blamed their forefathers for persecuting the prophets who foretold his appearance (Matth. xxiii. 30, 31); but their own conduct towards him was a proof, that had they lived in the days of the prophets, they would have acted as their fathers had done. So the resentment that many, who bear the Christian name in this day, discover against the doctrines of the gospel, and against the people who profess them, is a proof that they

would have concurred with those who crucified the Lord of glory, had they lived in Jerusalem at that time.

In this prophecy, David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks of the future as actually present. He saw the resistance that would be made to the person and kingdom of Messiah by the powers of the world; that they would employ their force and policy to withstand and suppress the decree and appointment of God. The question, Why? implies that their opposition would be both groundless and ineffectual.

1. It was entirely groundless and unreasonable. Messiah was indeed a King, and he came to set up a kingdom that should endure for ever. But his kingdom is not of this world; and, if rightly understood, would give no umbrage to human governments. It does not interfere with the rights of princes. His subjects are indeed primarily bound by the laws of their immediate King, and they must obey God rather than man (Acts. v. 29), if man will presume to enjoin such laws as contradict his known will. But with this exception, it is a part of the duty they owe to their Lord, to obey those whom he has placed, by his providence in authority over them. The kingdom of Messiah has little to do with what we call politics. His people are taught to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's (Matth. xxii. 21), and to yield a peaceful subjection to the powers that be, under whatever form of government their lot may be cast. They are strangers and pilgrims upon earth (1 Pet. ii. 11), their citizenship, treasures, and conversation, are in heaven; and they have no more direct concern with the intrigues and parties of politicians, than a traveller has in the feuds and disturbances which may happen in a foreign country through which he is passing. They are to obey God, they are to obey kings and governors in subordination to God; they are to render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour, Rom. xiii. 1—7. But where they cannot comply with the laws of government without breaking the laws of God, then they are not to obey, but to suffer patiently, committing their cause to him whom they serve; well knowing that he is able to protect or relieve them, so far as his wisdom judges it fit, and to make them abundant amends for all they can suffer for his sake. I am not a direct advocate for the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance in the largest sense. I set a great value upon the blessings of civil and religious liberty, I reverence the constitutional rights of nations, particularly of our own. But they are all dependant upon the will of our Lord; and I know not by what means they can be preserved to a people, when their sins have made them ripe for judgment. But let the dead bury their dead, Matth. viii. 22. God will never want instruments, when it is his pleasure to relieve the oppressed, or to abase the proud. For these purposes, he over-rules the councils and affairs of men, pours contempt upon the designs of princes, and takes the wise in their own craftiness. The subjects of his spiritual kingdom have only to commit their cause to him, to wait upon him, to observe and to admire his management. Their best interest is always safe. And even the troubles they meet with, are appointed for their good. But if they so far conform to the world, as to take an active and decided part in the disputes and contentions around them, they usually dishonour their christian character, and obstruct their own peace and comfort. There may be possibly some exceptions. God may sometimes place a servant of his, by the leading of his providence, in a post of high political importance, as he did Joseph and Daniel, but I believe such instances are few; and if any venture of their own accord beyond the proper line of their calling as christians, the event is usually grief and loss to them. They are described in his word, as those who are quiet in the land (Psal. xxxv 20), and such should be their deportment.

We are sure it was thus, in the first and golden days of christianity. The Roman government was then absolute, arbitrary, and oppressive. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and others who presided over it, and bore the name of Roman emperors, were beyond measure vile and abominable: one of them was, by a decree of the Roman senate, sentenced to death as a public enemy to mankind, but the Christians neither disputed their right, nor disobeyed their authority. Kings and rulers, therefore, have nothing to fear from the gospel of Christ. The maxims of sound policy would engage all their influence in facilitating its progress, for true christians will assuredly be good subjects. Impatience of subordination, contempt of lawful authority, tumults, riots, and conspiracies, are evils which would have no place if the gospel was generally received. But princes have been usually exposed to the flattery of designing men, who, by their arts and misrepresentations, have seduced them to act contrary to their true interests. Their mistaken efforts to suppress that cause, which, if maintained, would have been the best security of their thrones, have often stained the annals of their reign with innocent blood, and filled their dominions with misery. History furnishes many instances of kings, who might otherwise have lived beloved and died lamented, that have involved themselves and their families in the calamities with which they unjustly punished those who deserved their protection. For,

2. Opposition to Messiah and his kingdom is no less vain and ineffectual, than unreasonable and groundless. Nor is it vain only, but ruinous to those who engage in it. What did

the Jews build when they rejected the foundation-stone which God had laid in Zion? They acted, as they thought, with precaution and foresight. They said, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation." John xi. 48. Foolish politicians! Did they preserve their city by crucifying the Son of God? The very evil they feared came upon them. Or rather, being abandoned of God to their own councils, they brought it upon themselves. In a few years the Romans, with whom they appeared so desirous to keep upon good terms, destroyed their city with an unheard-of destruction, and exterminated them from the land. This was an emblem of the inevitable, total, irreparable ruin, which awaits all those who persist in rejecting the rule of Messiah. The nation, the individual, that will not serve him, must surely perish.

Ah! if sinners did but know what the bonds and cords are, which they are so determined to break; if they knew that his service is perfect freedom: if they were aware what more dreadful bonds and chains they are rivetting upon themselves, by refusing his easy yoke, they would throw down their arms and submit. They think, if they yield to the gospel, they must bid adieu to pleasure. But what will become of their pleasure, when, the day of his forbearance being expired, he will speak to them in his wrath, and fill them with hopeless horror and dismay?

Bless the Lord, ye favoured few, whose eyes are opened, whose hearts are softened, and who are become the willing people of this Saviour. Yet a little while, and he will appear again, and then you also shall appear with him in glory!

SERMON XXXIV.

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH IN VAIN.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. PSALM ii. 4.

THE extent and efficacy of the depravity of mankind, cannot be fully estimated by the conduct of Heathens destitute of divine revelation. We may say of the gospel, in one sense, what the apostle says of the law, "It entered that sin might abound," Rom. v. 20. It afforded occasion for displaying the alienation of the heart of man from the blessed God in the strongest light. The sensuality, oppression, and idolatry which have prevailed in all ages, sufficiently prove the wickedness of men to be very great. But the opposition which they who have rebelled against the government of their Creator, make to the proposals of his grace, is a proof still more striking. If sin has so hardened their hearts, and blinded their eyes, that of themselves they neither can nor will implore his mercy; yet it might be thought that if the great God, whom they have so heinously offended, should be pleased, of his own goodness, to make the first overtures of reconciliation, and to invite them to receive pardon, they would gladly attend to his gracious declaration; especially when they are informed, that to preserve them from perishing, he gave up his only Son to sufferings and death. But when they not only defy his power, but insult his goodness; when they reject and blaspheme the Saviour whom he commends to them; when they are but the more exasperated by his tenders of mercy; when they scorn his message, and persecute his messengers by whom he intreats them to be reconciled; this mad and ungrateful carriage shews such a rooted enmity against God in fallen men, as even the fallen angels are not capable of discovering. For Messiah took not on him the nature of angels, nor did he make proposals of mercy to them. But he did take upon him our nature. He visited us in person, for us he lived a sufferer, and died that we might live. The prophets foresaw and foretold the reception he would meet with, and their predictions were fulfilled. The Jews who professed to expect him, and the Heathens who had not heard of him, united their utmost efforts to withstand and defeat the purposes of his unexampled love. What must the holy angels think of the baseness, presumption, and obstinacy of such creatures!

But rebellion against God is not only wickedness, but folly and infatuation in the extreme. "Who ever hardened himself against the Lord and prospered?" Job, x. 4. He whom they opposed, and against whom they thought they had prevailed when they saw him dead upon the cross, soon resumed his glory and his throne. The text therefore principally respects the opposition made to his gospel and to his kingdom after his ascension, which is still carrying on, but which always was, and always will be in vain. The words I have read offer two points for the consolation of those who love him, and for the timely consideration of those who have hitherto disregarded him.

I. That he sitteth in the heavens.

II. The notice he taketh of his enemies; he smiles at their rage, and treats both their power and their policy with contempt.

I. He whom God has anointed (therefore called Messiah), he against whom kings and rulers, nations and the people rage, sitteth in the heavens. He has finished his great work, and entered into his rest; having by himself purged our sins, he is immoveably seated on his throne, at the right hand of the majesty on high, Heb. i. 3. He is the Head, King, and

Lord of principalities, dominions, and powers, possessed of all authority, unchangeably fixed over all, God blessed for evermore, Rom. ix. 5. In this character he is the Representative, High-Priest, Advocate, and Shepherd of all who put their trust in him. He is ever mindful of them. While he is preparing a place for them near himself, by the power of his Spirit, he maintains an intercourse with them, and manifests himself to them as he does not to the world. By his providence, which ruleth over all, he manages their concerns upon earth, supplies their wants, and gives them present and effectual help and support in their time of trouble. To him their eyes and hearts are directed, they look to him and are enlightened (Psal. xxxiv. 5), strengthened, and comforted. And under his protection they are safe. He having taken charge of them, and engaged to save them to the uttermost, no weapon formed against them can prosper. Now they may draw nigh to God with boldness, for they have one who ever liveth to make intercession for them. Now they may lay aside all anxious, uneasy cares, for they have a mighty Friend who careth for them. Now they may say, each one for himself, "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song, and my salvation," Is. xii. 2. Whether you have indeed fled to him for refuge as the hope set before you, committed your soul to him, and accepted him in all his offices, as your Prophet, Priest, and King, is a point of experience; if you have, he knows it, for he enabled you to do it; and he will not disappoint the hope and expectation which he himself has wrought in you. If you have, methinks you must know it likewise. Have you not done it more than once? Do you not daily repeat this surrender of yourself to him? It is certainly possible to assent to the truths of the gospel, considered merely as doctrines or propositions, yea to plead and dispute for them with much seeming earnestness, and yet to be entirely a stranger to their power. But I trust that they to whom I now speak will understand me Our Lord reminded Nathanael of what had passed under the fig-tree (John i. 48), when he thought himself alone. Do not I remind you of seasons, when no eye but the eye of Him who seeth in secret was upon you? Did not you then and there, once and again, accept him as your Saviour, upon the warrant of his own word, devote yourselves to his service, resign yourselves to his disposal, and entrust yourselves to his care? Then fear not. He that sitteth in the heavens is on your side. If the premises be well grounded, the inference is sure. And though many may rise up against you, they shall not prevail; for he will teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight, will cover your head in the day of battle, and in the end make you more than conquerors. For the battle is not yours, but the Lord's. Your enemies are his, and his cause is yours. They who associate against him shall be dashed in pieces, as the billows break and die upon a rocky shore.

II. The feebleness and insignificance of their rage against Messiah, is intimated by the manner in which he notices their proceedings; he holds them in derision, he laughs them to scorn. He has them perfectly under his controul, holds them in a chain when they think themselves most at liberty, appoints the bounds beyond which they cannot pass, and can in a moment check them, and make them feel his hook and bridle, when in the height of their career.

It is the Lord's pleasure not only to favour and to support his people, but to do it in such a way that it may appear to be wholly his own work, and that the praise belongs to him alone. And therefore he permits their enemies for a season to try if they can prevent his designs. For a season, things take such a course that their attempts seem to prosper; they threaten, they boast, and confidently expect to carry their point. But the contest always issues in their shame and confusion. He not only disconcerts their schemes, but makes them instrumental to the promoting of his own designs. Thus when he sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Pharaoh, instead of complying with his command, increased their burdens, added to the rigour of their bondage, and, though rebuked by a succession of severe judgments, he hardened himself the more, and was determined to detain them if he could. But he could not detain them a day or an hour beyond the appointed time which God had long before made known to Abraham, Exod. xii. 41, 42. Then they were delivered, and Pharaoh and his host overthrown in the Red Sea. Hereby the name of the God of Israel was more known, noticed and magnified, than it would have been, if Pharaoh had dismissed the people without reluctance or delay.

In like manner, when Messiah left the earth, his followers were considered as sheep without a shepherd. The world conspired to suppress his cause, and to root out the remembrance of his people. But the methods they employed counteracted their own designs. They who were dispersed by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen, preached the word wherever they went, the gospel spread from place to place, and the number of disciples daily increased. So that the Jewish rulers soon found themselves unequal to the task, and foreboded their own disappointment, doubting whereunto these things would grow, Acts v. 24. In some cases the Lord signally interposed, and shewed how entirely the lives and the hearts of his adversaries were in his hands. The haughty Herod was suddenly smitten by an invisible hand, with a loathsome and mortal disease, Acts xii. 23. He fell, devoured by worms;

but the success of the gospel, which he had presumed to withstand, greatly increased and spread. The furious zeal of Saul of Tarsus (Acts ix), against the truth, was silenced in a different manner. Jesus, whom he ignorantly persecuted, appeared to him in the way to Damascus, when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, disarmed his rage, made him a monument of his mercy, and an earnest and successful preacher of the faith which he had laboured to destroy.

From the Jews, the business was transferred to the Heathens, whose opposition was no less unavailing. Though they sometimes affected to boast that they had suppressed the Christian name, the gospel was propagated in defiance of their attempts to prevent it. The worst and the best of the Roman emperors were alike industrious, and alike unsuccessful, in their endeavours to stifle the work of God. At length, in the reign of Constantine, the Christian religion obtained the sanction and protection of imperial authority.

But it soon appeared that the religion of the New Testament gained little advantage by this revolution. Though the worship of heathen idols gradually declined, and sunk into disrepute, the bulk of the people of all ranks were only changed in name. The world still lay in wickedness (1 John v. 19), and true Christianity was still exposed to persecution. When the name of Christian ceased to be invidious and despicable, new names were soon invented to stigmatize the real servants of God; and ecclesiastical power gradually increased, till the mystery of iniquity reigned for ages in the temple of God. The persecutions of Popery equalled and exceeded those of Paganism. And they who aspired to be Christians indeed, were constrained, like the worthies of old, to wander on mountains and in deserts, to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth, Heb. xi. 38. Yet, under all disadvantages, there was still a remnant, according to the election of grace, who could not be compelled to wear the mark of the beast. And while persecutors, who could only kill the body, seemed to weaken the church militant, they increased the number and the songs of the church triumphant.

To appearance the church of Christ was often brought low. It was very low at the time of the Reformation. But then it suddenly was revived, and broke forth like the sun from behind a dark cloud; and the light of the gospel was diffused far and wide, almost as at the beginning, in the apostles days. But Protestants were quickly actuated by the same spirit as their Popish and Pagan predecessors had been. The form of Christianity was professed and protected, and the power of it denied and opposed. And to this day it remains a truth verified by experience, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must, in one way or other, suffer persecution, 1 Tim. iii. 12.

Of late years the sanguinary spirit, which, under pretence of doing God service, destroyed his people by fire and tortures, is much subsided. We live in a time when great pretences are made to candour and moderation. We have reason to be thankful for our religious liberty, to the good providence of God. But so far as men are concerned, we are not indebted for it, to a just sense and acknowledgment of the right of private judgment, but to the prevalence of sceptical indifference and infidelity. The religion of the gospel was, perhaps, never more despised and hated than at present. We seem to be returning apace to the state of the primitive ages, when there were but two sorts of persons, Christians and infidels. But notwithstanding all the arts and assaults of men, whether open enemies or pretended friends the Bible is still extant, the gospel is still preached, yea, is still spreading. The Lord has always had a people, though they have been often hidden from the general notice and observation of men. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs his opposers to scorn, and maintains his own cause in defiance of them all.

Surely if this work was not of God, the united efforts of kings, councils, popes, philsosophers, the great, the wise, the decent, and the profligate, must have overthrown it long ago. If a miracle be demanded in proof of christianity, behold one! Though the world has been raging and plotting against it, from its first appearance; though it has been fiercely assaulted by those without, and shamefully betrayed by many within, it still subsists, it still flourishes. And subsist it shall, for it is maintained by him, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can controul or change them as he pleases. He can, and he will, support and strengthen his people under all their sufferings. He can disappoint his adversaries by unexpected events, divide them among themselves, and so manage them by his providence, as to make them protect and promote the very cause which they hate. And whenever he pleases, he can, as it were, from the stones (Matth. iii. 9), raise up instruments to carry on his work, and to shew forth his praise. Therefore,

1. Let not his people tremble for the ark. Our eyes indeed should affect our hearts. It becomes us to be jealous for the Lord of hosts, to be concerned for the contempt and dishonour that is cast upon his government and grace, to be grieved for the abounding abominations of the day, and to pity and pray for obstinate sinners who know not what they do. But we need not fear the failure of his promise. His truth and honour are engaged for the success of his gospel, and they must stand or fall together. It is a cause dearer to him than it can be to us. The manifestation

of his glory in the salvation of sinners, by the doctrine of the cross, is the one great concern, for which the succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, is continued, and the visible frame of nature is preserved. He will work, and none shall let it. The kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. The fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and the dispersed of Israel shall return to the Lord their God, and be saved. These great events, to those who judge by an eye of sense, and according to the present state of things, may appear improbable or impossible. But the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? Is. xiv. 27.

2. Think it neither strange nor hard, if any of you are called to suffer for the sake of the truth. Think it not strange; for thus it has been from the beginning. Think it not hard; for our sufferings are small, if compared with the lot of many who have lived before us. We are not called to resist unto blood. Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see such days of liberty as we are favoured with, but have not seen them.

3. Consider seriously, Who is on the Lord's side? His is the strongest side, and must prevail. If you have yielded yourselves to him, and taken upon you his yoke, your best interests are safe, your final happiness is secured. Nothing can separate you from his love. You shall be kept by his power through faith, and no weapon formed against you shall prosper. But if you are against him, tremble, for the day of his wrath will come; "it will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and shall leave them neither root nor branch," Mal. iv. 1. Turn therefore in time from your evil ways, submit yourselves unto him, and implore his mercy while he waiteth to be gracious, that iniquity may not be your ruin.

SERMON XXXV

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH RUINOUS.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. PSALM ii. 9.

THERE is a species of the sublime in writing, which seems peculiar to the scripture, and of which, properly, no subjects but those of divine revelation are capable. With us things inconsiderable in themselves are elevated by splendid images, which give them an apparent importance beyond what they can justly claim. Thus the poet, when describing a battle among bees, by a judicious selection of epithets and figures, excites in the minds of his readers the idea of two mighty armies contending for empire. But the works and ways of God are too great in themselves to admit of any heightening representation. We conceive more forcibly of small things by illustrations borrowed from those which are greater; but the scripture frequently illustrates great things, by contrasting them with those which in our estimation are trivial and feeble. One instance, out of many which might be mentioned, is that truly sublime passage of the prophet: "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree," Isa. xxxiv. 4. The apostle, when favoured with a heavenly vision, introduces the same thought, almost in the same words: "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind: and the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together," Rev. vi. 13, 14. Such forms of expression are becoming the Majesty of the great God, before whom the difference between the great and the small in our judgment is annihilated. In his view, the earth, with all its inhabitants, are but as a drop which falls unnoticed from the bucket, or as the dust which cleaves to the balance, (Is. xl. 15), without affecting its equilibrium. At the same time, the simplicity of these illustrations, so well suited to confound the pride of the wise, is striking and obvious to the lowest capacities. If Homer or Virgil had been to describe the exertion and effect of the power of God, in subduing and punishing his enemies, they would probably have laboured for a simile sufficiently grand. But I much question if they would have thought of the image in my text, though none can be more expressive of utter irreparable ruin, or of the ease with which it is accomplished: He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The series of the passages we have lately considered is very regular and beautiful. Messiah ascended on high, and received gifts for men. The first and immediate consequence of his exaltation in our nature, is the publication of the gospel. Then follows the happy and beneficial influence of the gospel on those who thankfully receive it. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach these glad tidings! The next passage secures and describes its extensive progress—the sound went forth into all the earth. The opposition awakened by it is then described, First, as unreasonable—Why do the Heathen rage? Secondly, as ineffectual—the Lord laughs at his opposers; he sits upon his immoveable throne, and derides their attempts. Thirdly the final issue of their mad resistance their

confusion and ruin, is the subject of the verse I have read, which prepares for the close of the second part of the Oratorio. His enemies shall perish, his kingdom shall be established and consummated. And then all holy intelligent beings shall join in a song of triumph, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

The two expressions, of breaking with a rod of iron, and dashing in pieces, suggest nearly the same idea: But as elsewhere he is said to rule his enemies with a rod of iron (Rev. xix. 15), I shall avail myself of this variation, in order to give you a more complete view of the dreadful state of those who oppose Messiah and his kingdom. He rules them at present with a rod of iron, and hereafter he will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Let us therefore consider

I. How the Lord Messiah rules over impenitent and obstinate sinners in the present life. They attempt (in vain) to withdraw from his subjection; they oppose his holy will; they refuse to submit to his golden sceptre: He will therefore rule them with a rod of iron. For though they boast of their liberty, and presume to say, Who is Lord over us? (Psal. xii. 4) yet in the thing wherein they speak proudly, he is above them (Exod. xviii. 11): They cannot hide themselves from his notice, nor avoid the intimations of his displeasure.

1. One branch of his iron rule over them, consists in that certain and inseparable connection which he has established between sin and misery. The fruit of righteousness is peace, James iii. 18. They who live in the fear of the Lord, and yield a willing obedience to his word, not only possess peace of conscience, and a hope which can look with comfort beyond the grave, but are thereby preserved from innumerable evils, into which they who attempt to cast off his yoke unavoidably plunge themselves. On the contrary, the way of transgressors is hard, Prov. xiii. 15. It is hard in itself, if we set aside for a moment the consideration of the dreadful end to which it leads. Could you see what passes within the breast of a man who disdains to be governed by the rule of God's word, you would see his heart torn to pieces by the clamorous, insatiable demands of the various, violent, inconsistent appetites and passions, which, like so many wild beasts, are continually preying upon him. Not one of them can be fully gratified, much less all, for many of them are diametrically opposite to each other. The boilings of anger, the gnawings of envy, the thirst of covetousness, the anxieties attendant on pride and ambition, must make the mind that is subject to them miserable. There is no peace to the wicked; there can be none. Farther, their evil tempers and irregular desires produce outward and visible effects, which publicly and manifestly prove, that the service of sin is a hard drudgery, and that whatever pleasure it may seem to promise, its pay is misery and pain. "Who hath woe, contentions, and wounds without cause?" (Proverbs, xxiii. 29.) The drunkard. Lewdness and drunkenness are high roads, if I may so speak, leading to infamy, disease, penury, and death. Such persons do not live out half the days which their constitutions might have afforded, if they had not sold themselves to do wickedly. Again, look into their houses. Where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. How frequently may we observe, in their family-connections, discord and enmity between man and wife, unkind parents, disobedient children, tyrannical masters, and treacherous servants? Thus they live, hateful in themselves, and hating one another, Tit. iii. 2. If they have what the world accounts prosperity, their hard master Satan, so works upon their evil dispositions, that they can derive no real comfort from it. Every day, almost every hour, puts some new bitterness into their cup. And in trouble they have no resource: having no access to God, no promise to support them, no relief from him against their anxieties and fears, they either sink down in sullen, comfortless despondency, or in a spirit of wild rebellion, blaspheme him because of their plagues, Rev. xvi. 21. In society they are dreaded and avoided by the sober and serious, and can only associate with such as themselves. There indeed, they will pretend to be happy; they carouse, and make a noise, and assist each other to banish reflection; yet frequently the drink, or the devil, breaks their intimacies, and stirs them up to quarrels, broils, and mischief. Such is a life of sin. The Lord rules them with a rod of iron. They renounce his fear, and he refuses them his blessing. Nothing more is necessary to render them miserable than to leave them to themselves.

2. He rules them with a rod of iron, by his power over conscience. They may boast and laugh, but we know the gall and bitterness of their state; for we, likewise, were in it, until the Lord delivered us. Let them say what they will, we are sure that there are seasons, when, like him whom they serve, they believe and tremble, James ii. 19. They cannot always be in company, they cannot always be intoxicated; though this is the very reason why many intoxicate themselves so often, because they cannot bear their own thoughts when sober. They are then a burden and a terror to themselves. They feel the iron rod. How awful are the thoughts which sometimes awaken them, or keep them awake, in the silent hours of the night! What terrors seize them in sickness, or when they are compelled to think of death! What a death-warrant do they often receive in their souls, under the preaching of that word of God which fills his people with joy and peace!

Many will not hear it. But why not? They will not, because they dare not. I am persuaded there are more than a few of the brave spirits of the present day, who would willingly change conditions with a dog, and be glad to part with their reason, if they could at the same time get rid of the horrors which hunt their consciences. Is there one such person here? Let me entreat you to stop and consider, before it be too late. There is yet forgiveness with God. Your case, though dangerous is not desperate, if you do not make it so yourself. I would direct your thoughts to Jesus. Look to him, and implore his mercy. His blood can cleanse from all sin. He is able to save to the uttermost.

It is possible some may affect to contradict the representation I have made, and be ready to say, "I find nothing of all this. I take a pleasure in my way. I have a healthy body, money at my command, and I can sleep soundly. I feel none of the qualms of conscience you speak of; and though the saints and good folks care as little for me as I do for them, yet I am very well and happy with such acquaintance as I like best. As to an hereafter, I do not think of it; but I am determined to live now." In answer to sentiments of this kind, which I am afraid are too common, I observe,

3. That the amazing hardness and blindness of heart to which some sinners are given up, is another, and the most terrible effect of that iron rod with which the Lord rules his enemies. Pharoah could say as positively as you, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Exod. v. 2. But because, being often rebuked, he persisted in his obstinacy, the contest terminated in his destruction. If you are obstinate like him now, I believe you were not always so. You must have laboured hard, you must have resisted the light of truth, and have stifled many a conviction, before you could arrive to this pitch of obduracy. You have fought against the Holy Spirit; and woe unto you, if he be gone, gone for ever, and will strive with you no more. To be thus given up of God to a reprobate mind, is the heaviest judgment that a sinner can be visited with on this side of hell. I am at a loss what to say to a person thus disposed, and I hope there are none such present. But I would warn those, who, though they have sinned with a high hand, are not yet altogether past feeling, lest you fall into such a state of confirmed disobedience and unbelief. Take heed lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. iii. 13. If under the light of the gospel you can go on in a course of wilful, wanton, deliberate wickedness, you are upon the very edge of the unpardonable sin, of that state from which it is impossible to renew you to repentance. If the Bible be, as you vainly wish it may prove, a cunningly-devised fable, you may trample upon it with impunity, and laugh on securely to the end of life. But if it be true, remember you have been this day warned of the consequences of despising it. If you will perish, I am clear of your blood.

II. I proceed to consider the final issue of this unequal contest between the worms of the earth and their Maker. He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Such a vessel may be curiously wrought, and appear beautiful to the eye, but it is frail, easily broken, and, when once broken to pieces, it is irreparable. It is therefore a fit emblem of mortal man in his best estate. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, Psal. cxxxix. 14. The texture of the human frame is admirable. The natural capacities of the mind of man, the powers of his understanding, will, and affections, the rapidity of imagination, the comprehension of memory, especially in some instances, are so many proofs, that considered as a creature of God, he is a noble creature; and though he is debased and degraded by sin, there are traces of his original excellence remaining, sufficient to denominate him in the words of the poet, "majestic though in ruins." But if you suppose him rich, powerful, wise, in the common sense of the words, he is brittle as a potter's vessel, and while possessed of every possible advantage, he is but like the grass or the flower of the field, which, in its most flourishing state, falls in a moment at the stroke of the scythe, and withers, and dies. A fever, a fall, a tile, a grain of sand, or the air that finds its way through a crevice, may be an overmatch for the strongest man, and bring him down hastily to the grave. By a small change in the brain, or some part of the nervous system, he who now prides himself in his intellectual abilities may soon become a lunatic or an idiot. Disease may quickly render the beauty loathsome, and the robust weak as infancy. There are earthen or china vessels, which might possibly endure for many ages, if carefully preserved from violence. But the seeds of decay and death are sown in our very frame. We are crushed before the moth, and moulder away untouched under the weight of time. How surely and inevitably, then, must they whom the Lord strikes with his iron rod, be shattered with the blow!

Communities and collective bodies of men, are in his hand, no less frail than individuals. The first-born throughout Egypt, and the vast army of Sennacherib, perished in a night. The Romans were the iron rod in his hand, wherewith he dashed the Jewish nation to pieces. Their fragments are scattered far and wide to this day, and who can gather them up? The Roman empire was likewise dashed to pieces in its turn; and such has been the end successively of many powers, and of many persons who have presumed to oppose his designs. For a while they were permitted to

rage, and plot, and strive; but at length they stumbled and fell, and their memory is perished.

But it is proper to bring the consideration nearer home. I have been informed, that the music to which this passage is set, is so well adapted to the idea that it expresses, as in a manner to startle those who hear it. They who live in sinful habits, regardless of the gospel, would be startled, indeed, if they were duly sensible how directly the words apply to their own situation, and that the psalmist describes the manner in which God will treat them, if they continue impenitent. If we could see all that passes upon dying beds, we should often see the false peace and vain hopes of sinners dashed to pieces when eternity is opening upon their view. We shall certainly see the solemnity of the great day: "For we must all appear" not only as spectators, but as parties nearly interested in the proceedings, "before the judgment-seat of Christ." "Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him!" He will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and before him shall be gathered all nations. Where then shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? What will then become of those who despise, and those who abuse the gospel of the grace of God? The libertine, the infidel, the apostate, the hypocrite, the profane scoffer, and the false professor, how will they stand, or whither will they flee, when the great Judge shall sit upon his awful throne, and the books shall be opened, and every secret thing shall be disclosed! Alas for them that are full, and that laugh now, for then they shall pine and mourn, Luke vi. 25. Then their cavils will be silenced, their guilt, with all its aggravations, be charged home upon them, and no plea, no advocate be found. Can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong, when he shall speak to them in his wrath, and say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?"

But let them who love his name rejoice. You have fled for refuge to the hope set before you. To you his appearance will be delightful, and his voice welcome. You shall not be ashamed. This awful God is yours. He will then own and accept you before assembled worlds, and will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Then the days of your mourning shall be ended, and your sun shall go down no more, Matt. xxv. 34. Is. lx. 20.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE LORD REIGNETH.

Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Rev. xix. 6

The book of the Revelation, being chiefly prophetical, will not perhaps be fully understood, till the final accomplishment of the events shall draw near, and throw a stronger light upon the whole series. But while the learned commentators have been hitherto divided and perplexed in their attempts to illustrate many parts of it, there are other parts well adapted for the instruction and refreshment of plain christians; particularly those passages in which the scenery and images seemed designed to give us some representation of the happiness and worship of the heavenly state. Thus a plain unlettered believer, when reading with attention the fourth and fifth chapters, though he cannot give a reason why the elders are four-and-twenty, the living creatures four, and the number of their wings neither more nor less than six; yet, from the whole description of the Lamb upon the throne, the songs of the redeemed, and the chorus of the angels, he receives such an impression of glory, as awakens his gratitude, desire, and joy, and excites him likewise to take up the same song of praise, to him who has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood. He is content to leave the discussion of hard questions to learned men, while he feeds by faith upon those simple truths which can only be relished by a spiritual taste; and which, where there is such a taste, make their way to the heart, without the assistance of critical disquisition.

The subject of the preceding chapter, is the destruction of mystical Babylon, the head of the opposition against the kingdom of the Lord Christ. But Babylon sinks like a millstone in the mighty ocean, and is no more found. So must all his enemies perish. The catastrophe of Babylon, like that of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, is beheld by the saints and servants of the Lord with admiration, and furnishes them with a theme for a song of triumph to his praise. This may be properly styled sacred music indeed. It is commanded, inspired, and regulated, by the Lord himself. The performers are all interested in the subject, they who fear God, and are devoted to his service and glory. And though persons of this character are comparatively few upon earth, hidden, and in a manner lost, among the crowd of mankind, they will be, when brought together at last, a very large company. Their united voices are here compared to the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunders, and this is the solemn close, the

chorus of their song, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

The impression which the performance of this passage in the Oratorio usually makes upon the audience is well known. But however great the power of music may be, should we even allow the flights of poetry to be truth, that it can soften rocks, and bend the knotty oak, one thing we are sure it cannot do; it cannot soften and change the hard heart, it cannot bend the obdurate will of man. If all the people who successively hear the Messiah, who are struck and astonished, for the moment, by this chorus in particular, were to bring away with them an abiding sense of the importance of the sentiment it contains, the nation would soon wear a new face. But do the professed lovers of sacred music, in this enlightened age, generally live, as if they really believed that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth? Rather do not the greater part of them live, as they might do if they were sure of the contrary? as if they were satisfied to a demonstration, that either there is no God, or that his providence is not concerned in human affairs? I appeal to conscience; I appeal to fact.

I apprehend that this passage, taken in the strictest sense, refers to a period not yet arrived. Babylon is not yet fallen. The servants of God in the present day, will most probably fulfil their appointed time upon earth, like those who have lived before them, in a state of conflict. They must endure the cross, and sustain opposition for his sake. The people who shall live when the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, when the nations shall learn war no more, are yet unborn. But even now we may rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and that Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords. I must consider my text as referring to him. Many of the Heathens believed that God reigned. The christian doctrine is, that the Lord God omnipotent exerciseth his dominion and government in the person of Christ. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into his hands," John iii. 35. And thus our Lord, after his resurrection, assured his disciples, "All power is committed unto me in heaven and in earth," Matth. xxviii. 18. He has already taken to himself his great power and reigneth. His right of reigning over all is essential to his divine nature; but the administration of government in the nature of man, is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death. But in the union of both natures, he is one person, Christ Jesus the Lord. All the riches and fulness of the Godhead, all the peculiar honours of the Mediator, centre in him. They may be distinguished, but they are inseparable.

Happy are they who can, upon solid and scriptural grounds, exult in the thought that the Lord reigneth, and can make his government the subject of their hallelujahs and praises! Happy they, who see, acknowledge, and admire, his management in the kingdom of providence, and are the willing subjects of his kingdom of grace. Let us take a brief survey of his reigning glory in these kingdoms.

I. Great and marvellous is this Lord God omnipotent in his kingdom of universal providence! His mighty arm sustains the vast fabric of the universe. He upholds the stars in their courses. If we attentively consider their multitude, their magnitudes, their distances from us and from each other, and the amazing swiftness, variety, and regularity of their motions, our minds are overwhelmed, our thoughts confounded, by the vastness and the wonders of the scene. But he spoke them into being, and they are preserved in their stations and revolutions by his power and agency. If we fix our thoughts upon the earth, though in comparison of the immensity of his creation it is but as a point or a grain of sand, it is the object of his incessant care. All its various inhabitants derive their existence and their support from him. He provides for the young ravens when unable to fly, and for the young lions that traverse the woods. The instinct of animals, whereby they are unerringly instructed in whatever concerns the welfare and preservation of their species, so vastly exceeding the boasted wisdom of man, that he can neither imitate nor comprehend it, is communicated by him. He teaches the birds to build their nests, the spider to weave his web, and instructs the communities of bees, and insignificant emmets, to form their admirable policies and government among themselves. If we speak of intelligent beings, he does what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. He directs and over-rules the counsels and purposes of men, so that though they act freely, the event of all their different interfering schemes, is only the accomplishment of his purposes. When they are employed as his instruments, from small beginnings, and in defiance of difficulties apparently insuperable, they succeed beyond their own expectations. When unhappily engaged against his designs, in vain they rage and plot. He takes the wise in their own craftiness, pours contempt upon their power and policy, and all their great preparations melt like a mist, or like snow before the sun, and leave no trace behind. Still more wonderful, to the eye of faith, is his controul over Satan and the powers of darkness. Whatever, for wise reasons, though unknown to us, he may permit them to do, they cannot with all their subtlety or strength, detain one soul in their bondage longer than till his appointed time of release; nor recover one soul back to their dominion, of which he is pleased to undertake the care. On the contrary, he breaks the heads of these levia-

thans in pieces, turns their counsels against themselves, and makes them instrumental in purifying his people, and extending his church, by the means they employ for the destruction of both. Thus they who dwell under his shadow are safe; for all things are in his power, and he always careth for them, and keepeth them, as the pupil of his eye; and therefore, though they are exercised with trials, and suffer many things for their good, his eye being always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer, they are supported, supplied, relieved, delivered, and at last made more than conquerors.

II. He has a peculiar kingdom, which he has established distinct from the kingdoms of this world, though diffused and extended among them, and which, in due time, like leaven, will pervade and assimilate them all to himself. This is the kingdom of the gospel, his church. It is founded upon a rock, and though the gates of hell continually war against it, they cannot prevail. For he is a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it, Zech. ii. 5.

Here he reigns upon a throne of grace. He possesses and exercises unlimited authority as a sovereign, to save whom he pleases, to pardon all manner of sins and offences, and to admit rebels and enemies when they submit themselves and bow to his golden sceptre, into the number of his children and his friends. Seldom do the kings of the earth publish an act of grace in favour of those who have been guilty of rebellion, without clogging it with exceptions. Either they feel a resentment against some of the delinquents, which they have not magnanimity sufficient to conquer, or they dare not trust them. But his mercy is infinite; and he knows how to change their hearts when he pardons their sins.

Perhaps it may not be a digression wholly unuseful and impertinent, if I take this occasion to point out the several senses in which the word *Church* may be understood, agreeable to the scripture.

1. It denotes in the aggregate, the *mystical church*, the whole body of that spiritual kingdom, of which the Redeemer is the living and life-giving head, Col. i. 18. A succession of these has appeared upon earth in every age, from the days of righteous Abel, whom Cain slew; and we have reason to believe, that the far greater part of them are yet unborn. They will all be assembled together before the throne, in the great day of his final appearance, and inherit the kingdom of glory prepared for them. This is the church which God hath bought with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. Happy are they who belong to this society of the redeemed, whose names are written in heaven.

2. The *visible church* contains all those who bear and acknowledge the name of Christians, and who admit and enjoy the gospel-revelation. The church, in this sense, includes many nations. But it is a small thing to belong only to the visible church, for it is compared to a corn-floor (Matth. iii. 12), on which chaff is mingled with the wheat; to a field in which tares grow promiscuously with the good seed; to a fisher's net inclosing a great multitude of fishes both good and bad, Matth. xiii. 24, 47. But a time of discrimination will come. The chaff and the tares, and whatever is evil, will be consumed. Alas! what will it avail at last to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence," at thy table with thy true disciples, "and thou hast taught in our streets" (Luke xiii. 26, 27), and we have heard in our own language of thy wonderful works, if you can say no more? My heart is pained with the apprehension, lest some of you who have joined in the same public worship with true believers, have sat in the same seat, and lived in the same families, should at last see them, with whom you have been very nearly connected in this world, received into the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves be shut out.

3. The *catholic church* in any one period, is that part of the visible church which is united to the Lord by a living faith. It comprises all who agree in the profession of the fundamental truths of the gospel, and whose conversation is regulated by its precepts, or in the apostle's words, "All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. This catholic church, through the policy of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart, is too much divided against itself. Prejudice, bigotry, and remaining ignorance, greatly prevent that desirable union amongst true christians, which would promote their peace, comfort, and increase, and would contribute more than a thousand arguments to put their adversaries to shame and to silence. That shameful contention for denominations, parties, and favourite preachers, for which the apostle reproved the Corinthians (1 Cor. iii. 4), is still greatly to be lamented. But though they are too backward in acknowledging and assisting each other, the Lord is merciful to their weakness, and bears with them all. And as they grow in grace, and drink more into his Spirit, their hearts are enlarged, and they approach nearer to his pattern of long-suffering, patience, and tenderness.

4. The word *church* is applied to particular societies of christians, who are connected by a participation in the same ordinances of the gospel, and who maintain a scriptural separation from the sinful spirit and customs of the world. And though there may be pretenders among them, as there were among the apostolic churches, they are denominated by the better part. They belong to the catholic church by their profession of the truth, of course they are a part of the visible church; and those of them who are in deed and truth what they

profess to be, are living members of the mystical church, to which all the promises are made. By whatever name they are known or distinguished among men, they are branches of the true vine, they have their fruit unto holiness, and their end, everlasting life. But to return,

In this his church, or spiritual kingdom, he rules by wise and gracious laws and ordinances. He releases his subjects from all authority, in point of conscience, but his own, and enjoins them to call no one master but himself, Matth. xxiii. 8—10. If they stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made them free (Gal. v. 1), they will not give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of any man, nor follow him farther than he follows their Lord. And consequently, if they are influenced by his royal law of doing to others as they would that others should do unto them, they will not attempt to exert an undue authority, or wish to be called masters themselves, so as to assume a dogmatical carriage, or to expect a universal and absolute submission. But it must be owned that in our present state of infirmity, this privilege is not sufficiently prized, nor this command duly complied with, there being scarcely a man who does not either arrogate too much to himself, or allow too much to others. A fault in the one or the other of these respects, may be assigned as a principal cause of most of the evils which deform the appearance, or injure the peace of the church. But the design of his gospel is to set his people at liberty from the yoke of men, from the fetters of custom and tradition, of superstition and will-worship; that they may enjoy in his service, a state of perfect freedom.

For it is the principal glory of his kingdom, that he reigns in the hearts of his people. There he writes his precepts, impresses his image, and erects his throne; ruling them, not merely by an outward law, but by an inward secret influence, breathing his own life and Spirit into them, so that their obedience becomes, as it were, natural, pleasurable, and its own reward. By the discoveries he affords them of his love, he wins their affections, captivates their wills, and enlightens their understandings. They derive from him the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. i. 7), and run with alacrity in the way of his commandments.

It is impossible therefore to make this song our own, and cordially to rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, unless we are the willing subjects of his government; unless we are really pleased with his appointed way of salvation, approve of his precepts, and, from a view of his wisdom and goodness, can cheerfully submit and resign ourselves to the disposal of his providence. In all these respects we are by nature at variance with him. We are too proud to be indebted to his grace, too wise in our own conceits to desire his instruction, too obstinately attached to the love and practice of sin, to be capable of relishing the beauty and spirituality of his commandments. And our love of the world, and the things of it, is too strong and grasping, to permit us to be satisfied with the lot, and with the dispensations he appoints for us. We wish, if possible, and as far as possible we attempt, to be our own carvers. We are unthankful when he bestows, impatient if he withholds, and if he sees fit to resume the gifts of which we are unworthy, we repine and rebel against his will. This enmity must be subdued, before we can be pleased with his government. In other words, we must be changed, we must be made new creatures. To produce this change, this new creation, the gospel is the only expedient; and when revealed and applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, the miracle is wrought. The sinner who is first convinced of his guilt and misery, and then reconciled to God by faith in the great atonement, willingly yields to his administration. He owns and feels the propriety of his proceedings, is ready to acknowledge, in his sharpest afflictions, that the Lord is gracious, and has not dealt with him according to the desert of his iniquities. He considers himself as no longer his own, but bought with a price, and brought under the strongest obligations, to live no longer to himself, but to him who loved him, and gave himself for him. And what was before his dread and dislike, becomes now the joy of his heart, the thought, that the Lord reigneth, and that all his concerns are in the hands of him who doeth all things well.

Are there any among us, who say in their hearts, We will not have this Saviour to rule over us? The thought is no less vain than wicked. He must, he will reign, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet. You must either bend or break before him.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE EXTENT OF MESSIAH'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM.

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Rev. xi. 15.

THE kingdom of our Lord in the heart, and in the world, is frequently compared to a building or house, of which he himself is both the foundation and the architect, Isa. xxviii. 16; liv. 11, 12. A building advances by degrees (1 Corinth. iii. 9. Ephes. ii. 20—22), and while it is in an unfinished state, a stranger cannot, by viewing its present appearance,

form an accurate judgment of the design, and what the whole will be when completed. For a time, the walls are of unequal height, it is disfigured by rubbish, which at the proper season will be taken away; and by scaffolding, which, though useful for carrying on the building, does not properly belong to it, but will likewise be removed when the present temporary service is answered. But the architect himself proceeds according to a determinate plan, and his idea of the whole work is perfect from the beginning. It is thus the Lord views his people in the present life. He has begun a good work in them, but as yet every part of it is imperfect and unfinished; and there are not only defects to be supplied, but deformities and incumbrances that must be removed. Many of the dispensations and exercises which contribute to form their religious character, do not properly belong to that work which is to abide, though they have a subserviency to promote it. When that which is perfect is come, the rest shall be done away.

And thus, although the growth and extent of his kingdom is the great scope and object of his providence, to which all the revolutions that take place in the kingdoms of this world shall be finally subservient; yet the steps by which he is carrying forward his design, are, for the most part, remote from the common apprehensions of mankind, and therefore seldom engage their attention. His kingdom, founded upon the Rock of ages, is building, advancing, and the gates of hell shall not be able to withstand its progress. Only detached and inconsiderable parts of the plan are as yet visible, and the beauties are everywhere obscured by attendant blemishes; but his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Princes and statesmen seldom think of him, are seldom aware, that in prosecuting their own schemes, they are eventually fulfilling his purposes, and preparing the way to promote the cause which they despise, and often endeavour to suppress. But thus it is. Sometimes he employs them, more directly, as his instruments; and when they are thus engaged in his work, their success is secured. So Cyrus, whom Isaiah mentioned by name (Is. xlv. 1—5), long before his birth, as the appointed deliverer of Israel from their captivity, prospered in his enterprises, being guided and girded by him whom he knew not, and established his own power upon the ruins of the Assyrian monarchy. The Roman empire likewise increased and prospered from small beginnings, that a way might be opened, in the proper season, for the destruction of the Jewish economy, and for facilitating the preaching of the gospel. And posterity will see, that the principal events of the present age, in Asia and America, have all a tendency to bring forward the accomplishment of my text; and are leading to one grand point, the spreading and establishment of the church and kingdom of our Lord. His plan is unalterably fixed. He has said it, and it shall be done. Things will not always remain in their present disordered state; and though this desirable period may be yet at a distance, and appearances very dark and unpromising, the word of the Lord shall prevail over all discouragements and opposition.

Prophecies which are not yet fulfilled will necessarily be obscure. Many learned men have laboured to explain the prophecies in this book, to ascertain the facts which are foretold, and to fix the dates when they may be expected to take place. But they are so divided in their judgments, and with regard to several of the most eminent who thus differ, the support their opinions derive from the character and abilities of the proposers is so nearly equal, that those who consult them are more likely to be embarrassed than satisfied. For myself, I think it becomes me to confess my ignorance, and my inability, either to reconcile the conjectures of others, or to determine which is the more probable, or to propose better of my own. I do not, therefore, undertake to give the precise sense of this passage, as it stands connected with the rest of the chapter. Nor should I, perhaps, have attempted to preach from it, but upon this occasion. It is introduced, with great propriety, in the Messiah, as a close to the second part, which begins with a view of the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, by the power of his priestly office; and concludes with an account of his glorious success as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

My business is only to lead you to some pleasing and profitable reflections upon this subject, now it comes in my way. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament, that speak in magnificent strains of a kingdom, which God would, in his appointed time establish upon the earth; the sense of which is greatly weakened and narrowed, if restrained, as some commentators would restrain it, to the restoration of Israel to their own land, from their captivity in Babylon. Yet it must be allowed, that the highly figurative language in which many of these prophecies are expressed, a great part of which cannot be understood literally, renders the interpretation difficult.

What we read in the twentieth chapter of this book, of a period in which the saints shall reign with Christ during a thousand years, has given occasion to almost a thousand conjectures, concerning a millennian state. Some persons suppose, that the present frame of nature shall be dissolved and changed, and expect a proper resurrection of the dead; after which, the Lord will personally reign with his people upon the earth, when purified by fire, and restored to its primitive perfection and beauty. If so, earth will be heaven; for the

state of happiness believers are taught to hope for, depends not upon local circumstances, but chiefly consists in the enjoyment of his unveiled immediate presence, and in beholding his glory. Others seem to conceive of the millennium, nearly in the same manner as the Jews formed their expectations of Messiah's kingdom. They think that temporal honours, dominion, prosperity, and wealth, will then be the portion of believers; the very portion which they are now called upon to renounce and despise. But, as I have hinted, large allowances must be made for the metaphorical language of prophecy. We read, that the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold, and that the twelve gates are twelve pearls (Rev. xxi. 15, 21); but no person of sound judgment can suppose, that this description is to be understood strictly, according to the letter. The personal presence of Messiah with his people is not necessary to such degrees of happiness, as are compatible with the present state of mortality and imperfection. It is sufficient, if he vouchsafes to dwell with them by his Spirit. Much less are temporal dominion and wealth necessary to the prosperity and honour of his spiritual kingdom. But what then are we encouraged to expect, beyond what has been hitherto known, with regard to this point? Let us consult the scriptures, which alone can guide and determine our inquiry. I will select some express passages, a few out of many which might be adduced, but sufficient, I hope, by the rules of sober interpretation, to lead us to a satisfactory answer.

The glory and happiness of Messiah's kingdom, is described by the prophets in terms which cannot be justly applied to any period of the church already past. They sometimes represent it by a variety of beautiful pastoral images, and sometimes in plainer language. Thus Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 2—4. Again, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah, xi. 6—9. I might likewise transcribe the whole of the sixtieth chapter, but shall only offer you the latter part of it. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time," Isaiah, lx. 18—22. To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing," Ezekiel, xxxiv. 23—26. And again, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced and inhabited," Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, 34, 35. The prophet Zechariah speaks to the same effect. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts

hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one," Zech. ii. 10, 11; xiv. 9.

Though the promises and prophecies of this import are addressed to the church under the names of Israel, Jacob, Zion or Jerusalem, we are certain they were not fulfilled to the nation of Israel while their civil government subsisted. Their national prosperity and glory were greatly diminished before any of these prophecies were revealed. They were an inconstant and a suffering people, during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, till at length their city and temple were destroyed by the Chaldeans. And though they returned from their captivity, and their city and temple were rebuilt, they continued tributary and dependent, and were successively subject to the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman power. Their obstinate rejection and crucifixion of Messiah, filled up the measure of their iniquities, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost. They were soon afterwards exterminated from their land, their constitution, both of church and state, utterly subverted; and they remain, to this day, in a dispersed state, which renders their observance of the law impracticable.

It seems equally plain, that these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled to the christian church. The greater part of the earth, to this day, is unacquainted with the name of Jesus. And the general face of Christendom, whether in Popish or in Protestant countries, exhibits little more of the spirit and character of the gospel, than is to be found among the Heathens. If christianity be compatible with pride or baseness, with avarice or profusion, with malice and envy, with scepticism in principle and licentiousness of conduct, then christians abound: but if humility, integrity, benevolence, and a spiritual mind, are essential to a christian; if we judge by the criterion which our Lord himself appointed, and account only those his disciples who live in the exercise of mutual love, it is to be feared that they are but few, even in the places which are most favoured with the light of the gospel. But can the scriptures be broken? Can the promises of the Lord fail? By no means. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fail of accomplishment.

It is not necessary to suppose that every individual of mankind shall be savingly converted to the Lord in this future day of his power; but I apprehend the current language of the prophecies warrants us to hope, that the prayers and desires of the church shall, in some future period, be signally answered, in the following respects.

1. That the gospel shall visit the nations which are at present involved in darkness. The Heathen are given to Messiah for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. At present (as I have formerly observed, Ser. xxxii.) if the whole of Christendom were inhabited by real Christians, they would bear but a small proportion to the rest of mankind. Large countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, where the gospel was once known, have been for many ages involved in Mahommedan darkness. The scattered remnants of the Greek church in Turkey are so miserably depraved and ignorant, that they scarcely deserve to be mentioned as an exception. The rest of Asia knows little of christianity, unless they have learnt it in the eastern parts from the cruelty and tyranny of men who bear the name of christians. The like may be said of America, excepting the northern provinces of our late dominion there. For the zeal of the Spaniards and Portuguese has produced few other effects than rapine, slavery, and deluges of human blood. The interior parts, both of Africa and America, are unknown. The countries and islands lately discovered in the southern hemisphere, are left, as they were found, in gross ignorance. The exertions of our navigators to supply them with sheep and cows, and useful implements, from Europe, were humane and laudable. But it does not appear that the least attempt was made to impart to them the knowledge of our holy religion. The only missionary they have from us (if he be yet living), is the much-spoken-of Omiah. This man was brought to England, almost from the Antipodes; he spent some time amongst us, and was then sent back to tell his countrymen what he had seen and heard. But if he gave a faithful account of our customs, morals, and religion, so far as they fell within the circle of his own observations, the relation would certainly be little to our honour, and I am afraid much to their hurt. In brief, a large part of Europe, almost the whole of the other three continents, with the islands in the Eastern and Southern Oceans, are destitute of the true gospel. But there is a time approaching, called the fulness of the Gentiles, when the Redeemer's glory shall dawn and shine upon all nations. And though we cannot see when or how this happy change shall be affected, yet, in the Lord's hour, mountains shall sink into plains. Nor is it more improbable to us now, than it would have seemed to an inhabitant of Rome in the time of Julius Cæsar, that the island of Great Britain should one day be distinguished by all those privileges which the Providence of God has since bestowed upon it.

2. That this gospel shall prevail, not in word only, but in power. Even where the name of Christ is professed, but little of the power of it is at present known. The superstition and false worship generally prevalent within the pale of the Roman and Greek churches, may be mentioned without offence

to Protestants. But the bulk of the Protestant countries are equally overspread with scepticism and wickedness. Few comparatively, among Protestants, are friendly to that gospel which the apostles preached; and much fewer are they who are influenced by it. Perhaps nó nation is favoured with greater advantages for knowing the truth than our nation, nor any city more favoured than this city. I doubt not but there are persons now living, who would have been thought eminent christians, if they had lived in the first and happiest age of the church; and I trust their number is greater than we are aware of. The Lord has a hidden people, little known to the world or to each other. But if we judge by the standard of truth, we must acknowledge that the power of religious profession is very low. How little does it appear in the lives, tempers, and pursuits of the most who hear the gospel? but the time will come when christians shall again be known by their integrity, spiritual-mindedness, and benevolence, and by all the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. The fall of mystical Babylon, and of Antichrist, in its various forms, and the calling of the Jews, are events which are positively foretold, and which, when they come to pass, will have great effects. Zion as yet, is only building, but it shall be built.

3. That the animosities and disputes which prevail among christians shall cease. The observation of a late ingenious writer, which, it is to be feared, he was confirmed in by his own experience, is too much founded in truth:—"We have just religion enough to make us hate one another." The spirit of party, prejudice, bigotry, and interest, a zeal for systems, forms, modes, and denominations, furnish men with plausible pretences for indulging their unsanctified passions, and deceive them into an opinion, that while they are gratifying their pride and self-will, they are only labouring to promote the cause of God and truth. Hence often the feuds which obtain among religious people are pursued with greater violence, and to greater lengths, and are productive of more mischievous consequences, than the quarrels of drunkards. The lovers of peace, who refuse to take a part in these contentions, but rather weep over them in secret, are censured and despised as neutrals and cowards, by the angry combatants on all sides, while the world despises and laughs at them all. It was not so in the beginning, nor will it be so always. The hour is coming, when believers shall be united in love, shall agree in all that is essential to a life of faith and holiness, and shall live in the exercise of forbearance and tenderness towards each other, if, in some points of smaller importance, they cannot think exactly alike; which possibly may be the case in the best times, in the present imperfect state of human nature. Ephraim shall then no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, Is. xi. 13.

4. That it will be a time of general peace. At present, the kingdoms, which, by their profession, should be subjects of the Prince of Peace, are perpetually disturbing, invading, and destroying each other. They live in habits of mutual fear and jealousy, and maintain great armies on all sides; that each nation may be prepared, if occasion offers, to strike the first blow. War is followed as a trade, and cultivated as a science; and they who, with the greatest diligence and success, spread devastation and ruin far and wide, and deluge the earth with human blood, acquire the title of heroes and conquerors. Can there be a stronger confirmation of what we read in scripture concerning the depravity of man? Can we conceive an employment more suited to gratify the malignity of Satan and the powers of darkness, if they were permitted to appear and act amongst us in human shapes? Could such enormities possibly obtain, if the mild and merciful spirit of the gospel generally prevailed? but it shall prevail at last, and then the nations shall learn war no more, Is. ii. 4.

How transporting the thought! that a time shall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteousness, shall obtain through the earth. The evils (and these are the greatest evils of human life) which men bring upon themselves, and upon each other, by their wickedness, shall cease; and we may believe that the evils in the natural world will be greatly abated. Sin will no longer call down the tokens of God's displeasure, by such public calamities as hurricanes, earthquakes, pestilence and famine. And if some natural evils, as pain and sickness, should remain, submission to the will of God, and the compassion and tenderness of men towards the afflicted, will render them tolerable.

If this prospect be desirable to us, surely it will be the object of our prayers. The Lord will do great things, but he will be inquired of by his people for the performance.

But to many persons the extension of dominion and commerce appears much more desirable. The glory and extent of the British government has been eagerly pursued, and the late diminution of our national grandeur and influence has been much laid to heart; while the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the Heathens, are considered by the politicians and merchants of the earth, as trivial concerns, unworthy of their notice, or rather as obstacles to the views of ambition and avarice. But it is said of Messiah, and of his church, The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, Is. lx. 12. The word of God may be slighted, but it cannot be annulled; and it is more a subject for lamentation than wonder, that our national prosperity should decline, when we are indif-

ferent, yea, adverse to that cause which the great Governor of the world has engaged to promote and establish.

SERMON XXXVIII.

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

'And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written), KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. REV. xix. 16.

THE description of the administration and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, in defiance of all opposition, concludes the second part of the Messiah. Three different passages from this book are selected to form a grand chorus, of which his title in this verse is the close; a title which has been sometimes vainly usurped by proud worms of the earth. Eastern monarchs, in particular, have affected to style themselves King of kings, and Lord of lords. In the scriptural language, men, whether high or low, rich or poor, one with another, are compared to worms and potsherds of the earth; but they are by nature so strongly affected by pride, that they cannot invent titles of honour answerable to the idea they have of their own importance, without intrenching upon the divine prerogative. Thus sovereignty, majesty, holiness, and grace, and other attributes which properly belong to God alone, are parcelled out among the great. But let the great and the mighty know that wherein they speak proudly, Messiah is above them. The whole verse (of which the latter clause only is in the Oratorio) offers two points to our meditations.

I. How he is represented as wearing his title. It is written, or inscribed, upon his vesture dipped in blood, and upon his thigh; either upon that part of his vesture which covers his thigh, or upon the upper part of his vesture, and upon his thigh likewise.

II. The title itself,—King of kings, and Lord of lords. Whatever power the kings and lords among mankind possess, is derived from him, and absolutely subject to his controul.

I. The manner in which he wears his name or title. It is written upon his vesture, and upon his thigh.

1. This name being written upon his vesture, denotes the manifestation and the ground of his authority. It is written upon his outward garment, to be read, known, and acknowledged by all beholders. And it is upon his bloody garment, upon the vesture stained with his own blood, and the blood of his enemies; which intimates to us, that his government is founded upon the success of his great undertaking. In the passage from whence this verse is selected, there are three names attributed to Messiah. He has a name which no one knows but himself (ver. 12), agreeable to what he declared when upon earth: "No man (*οὐδεὶς*, no one, neither man nor angel) knoweth the Son, but the Father;" this refers to his eternal power and Godhead. A second name, The Word of God (ver. 13), denotes the mystery of the divine personality. The name in my text imports his glory, as the Mediator between God and man, in our nature, which, when, he resumed it from the grave, became the seat of all power and authority; which power we are now taught to consider, not merely as the power of God, to whom it essentially belongs, but as the power of God exercised in and by that Man who died upon the cross for our sins. In consequence of his obedience unto death, he received a name which is above every name, Phil. ii. 9. This inscription his own people read by the eye of faith in the present life, and it inspires them with confidence and joy, under the many tribulations they pass through in the course of their profession. Hereafter it shall be openly known, and read by all men. Every eye shall see it, and every heart must either bow or break before him.

2. It is written upon his thigh. The thigh is the emblem of power, and is the part of the body on which the sword is girded, Ps. xlv. 3. By this emblem we are taught, that he will assuredly maintain and exercise the right which he has acquired. As he has a just claim to the title, he will act accordingly. Many titles among men are merely titular. So the King of Great Britain is styled likewise King of France, though he has neither authority nor possession in that kingdom. But this name which Messiah bears is full of life, truth, and influence. He is styled King of kings, and Lord of lords, because he really is so; because he actually rules and reigns over them, and does according to his own pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, with an absolute and uncontroulable sway, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Dan. iv. 35.

II. The title itself is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. Too many of them imagine a vain thing. They take counsel together, and set themselves against him (Ps. ii. 4), saying, Let us break his bands asunder. But he sitteth in the heavens, and has them in derision. He has his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, and the result of all their contrivances is neither more nor less than the accomplishment of his will.

1. The rage they discover, and the resistance they make, cannot weaken this truth, but rather render it more evident. If it be asked, Why does he permit them to resist? we may give an answer in point from the case of Pharaoh. He resisted and he perished.

He was often warned and rebuked, but he still hardened his neck, and continued stubborn under repeated judgments, till at length he was destroyed without remedy. Thus the God of Israel was more magnified, and the people of Israel were more honoured, in the view of the surrounding nations, when they were brought from Egypt with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm, and when Pharaoh and his armies were overthrown in the Red Sea, than the nature of the case would have admitted, if Pharaoh had made no opposition to their departure. Yet the obstinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are assured that God hardened his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to suppose that God is the author of the sin, which he hates and forbids. It is written again, that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man (James i. 13), and the scripture is to be interpreted consistently with itself. It would be absurd to ascribe darkness or ice to the agency of the sun, though both inevitably follow, if the light and heat of the sun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is necessary to keep water in that state of fluidity which we commonly suppose essential to its nature; but it is rather essential to the nature of water to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is necessary to preserve it in a fluid state; and the hardest metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increased. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is soft and impressive, capable of feeling and tenderness, we must attribute it to the secret influence of the Father and Fountain of light; and if he is pleased to withdraw his influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration.

2. The kings of the earth are continually disturbing the world with their schemes of ambition. They expect to carry every thing before them, and have seldom any higher end in view than the gratification of their own passions. But in all they do they are but servants of this great King and Lord, and fulfil his purposes, as the instruments he employs to inflict prescribed punishment upon transgressors against him, or to open a way for the spread of his gospel. Thus, under the Old-Testament dispensation (for he was King from everlasting), the successes of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and the exaltation of Cyrus, were entirely owing to their being employed by him, as an axe or a saw in the hand of the workman, Isa. x. 15. And they acted under a limited commission, beyond which they could not go. They had one thing in view, He had another; and when his design was accomplished we hear of them no more. Time would not suffice, were I to adduce the many striking instances of the like kind which offer to observation from the perusal of modern history. It is well known, with respect to that great event, the Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century, and especially in our own land, that many of the principal persons who contributed to its establishment hated it in their hearts. But their ambition, appetites, and worldly policy engaged them in such measures, as the King of kings over-ruled to produce consequences which they neither intended nor could foresee, and which, when they did apprehend, they would have prevented if they could, but it was too late. Future writers, I doubt not, will make the like reflection upon the American war, in the origin and progress of which there was such an evident disproportion between the apparent causes and the effects produced by them, between the first designs and expectations of the principal actors on both sides and the final event, that I think they who do not perceive a superintending Providence conducting the whole affair, as a preparation to still greater and more important revolutions, must be quite at a loss to account for what has already happened, upon any principles of human policy or foresight.

3. That he is King of kings, and Governor among the nations, is farther evident from the preservation of his people, for the world is against them, and they have no protector but him. The wrath of man, like the waves of the sea, has bounds prescribed to it which it cannot pass. So far as he is pleased to overrule it to his own praise, he will permit it to operate, but the remainder, that is not subservient to the accomplishment of his purpose, he will restrain Psal. lxxvi. 10. But he works so secretly, though powerfully, by the agency of second causes, that only they who are enlightened by his word and Spirit can perceive his interference. He permitted Ahithophel to give that counsel to Absalom, which though wicked, was, in the political sense of the word, prudent; that is, it was the probable method of putting David into the power of his rebellious son. David had prayed that the Lord would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, 2 Sam. xv. 31. Had the Lord instantly deprived Ahithophel of his reason, this prayer would have been more visibly, but not more effectually answered, than by the counter-advice of Hushai, which though rash and extravagant, being suited to gratify the vanity and folly of Absalom (2 Sam. xvii. 14), rendered the other abortive. Sometimes the enemies of his church divide and wrangle among themselves, and then one party, to mortify and oppose the other, will protect those whom otherwise they wish to destroy. Thus Paul escaped from the malice of the Jewish council, by the sudden disagreement which arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, (Acts xxiii. 7), though they came together equally determined to destroy him. At other times, kings and statesmen act so inconsistently with their professed aims, and take steps

so directly calculated to prevent what they wish to obtain, or to bring upon themselves what they mean to avoid, that we can only say they are infatuated. A very small compliance seemed likely to have secured the affection of the twelve tribes to Rehoboam. We are ready to wonder that he could not be prevailed on to speak mildly to the people for one day, with a view of engaging them to be his servants for ever. But when we read that the cause was from the Lord (1 Kings xii. 15), and that, in this way, his purpose of separating the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was effected, the wonder ceases. Very observable, likewise, was the coincidence of circumstances which preserved the Jews in Persia from the destructive designs of their adversary Haman. If the king had slept that night, as usual, or if his attendants had read to him in any book but the Chronicle of the empire, or in any part of that Chronicle but the very passage in which the service of Mordecai had been recorded, humanly speaking, Haman would have carried his point, Esther vi. 1. In this manner, by a concurrence of circumstances, each of them, if considered singly, apparently trivial, and all of them contingent with respect to any human foresight or prevention, the Lord often pours contempt upon the wise and the mighty, and defeats their deepest laid and best-concerted schemes, in the moment when they promise themselves success.

Many salutary and comfortable inferences may be drawn from the consideration of this subject. Some of them I may perhaps have formerly mentioned, but they will well bear a repetition. We have need to be reminded of what we already know.

1. It should inspire us with confidence. If the Lord of hosts, the Lord of lords, be for us, what weapon or counsel can prosper against us? However dark and threatening appearances may be, we need not tremble for the ark of God. The concernments of his church are in safe hands. The cause so dear to us, is still more dear to him. He has power to support it when it is opposed, and grace to revive it when it is drooping. It has often been brought low, but never has been, never shall be forsaken. When he will work, none can hinder. Nor need you fear for yourselves, if you have committed yourselves and your all to him. The very hairs of your head are numbered, Matth. x. 30. There is a hedge of protection around you (Job i. 10), which none can break through without his permission; nor will he permit you to be touched, except when he designs to make a temporary and seeming evil conducive to your real and permanent advantage.

2. It should affect us with an admiring and thankful sense of his condescension. "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest be so mindful of him?" He humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, Psal. cxiii. 6. But he stoops still lower. He affords his attention and favour to sinful men. His eye is always upon his people, his ear open to their prayers. Not a sigh or falling tear escapes his notice. He pities them as a father pities his children; he proportions their trials to their strength, or their strength to their trials, and so adjusts his dispensations to their state, that they never suffer unnecessarily, nor in vain.

3. How great is the dignity and privilege of true believers! Is the man congratulated or envied whom the king delighteth to honour? Believers are more frequently despised than envied in this world. But they may congratulate one another. The King of kings is their friend. They have honours and pleasures which the world knows nothing of. Their titles are high, they are the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. v. 18. Their possessions are great, for all things are theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21. They are assured of what is best for them in this life, and of life eternal hereafter. They are now nearly related to the King of kings, and shall ere long be acknowledged and owned by him before assembled worlds. They who now account the proud happy, will be astonished and confounded when they shall see the righteous, whom they once undervalued, shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of God.

4. We may lastly infer the extreme folly and danger of those who persist in their rebellion and opposition against this King of kings, and Lord of lords. Though he exercises much patience and long-suffering towards them for a season, the hour is approaching when his wrath will burn like fire. It is written, and must be fulfilled, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psal. ix. 17. Oh the solemnities of that great day, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved, when the Judge shall appear, the books be opened, and all mankind shall be summoned to his tribunal! Will not you tremble and bow before him, ye careless ones, while he is seated upon a throne of grace, and while the door of grace stands open? Once more I call, I warn, I charge you, to repent and believe the gospel. If today you will hear his voice it is not yet too late. But who can answer for to-morrow? Perhaps this night your soul may be required of you, Luke xii. 20. Are you prepared for the summons? If not, seize the present opportunity. Attend to the one thing needful. Seek his face, that your soul may live. If not, remember that you are warned; your blood will be upon your own head. We have delivered our message, and if you finally reject it you must answer for yourselves to him whose message it is.

SERMON XXXIX.

JOB'S FAITH AND EXPECTATION.

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Job, xix 25, 26.

CHRISTIANITY, that is, the religion of which Messiah is the author and object, the foundation, life, and glory, though not altogether as old as the creation, is nearly so. It is coeval with the first promise and intimation of mercy given to fallen man. When Adam by transgression had violated the order and law of his creation, his religion, that is, the right disposition of his heart towards God, was at an end. Sin deprived him at once of faith and hope, of love and joy. He no longer desired, he no longer could bear the presence of his offended Maker. He vainly sought to avoid it; and when compelled to answer, though he could not deny his guilt, instead of making an ingenuous confession, he attempted to fix the blame upon the woman, or rather indeed upon the Lord himself, who had provided her for him. But mercy, undeserved and undesired, relieved him from a state in which he was already become obdurate and desperate. A promise was given him of the seed of the woman (Gen. iii. 15), which virtually contained, as the seed contains the future plant, the substance of all the subsequent promises which were fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and by all that he did, or suffered, or obtained for sinners, in the character of Mediator. For a sinner can have no comfortable intercourse with the holy God, but through a Mediator. Therefore the apostle observes of the patriarchs and servants of God, under the Old Testament, "These all died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. We can say nothing higher than this, of the apostles and martyrs, under the New Testament. They died, not trusting in themselves that they were righteous, not rejoicing in the works of their own hands; but they died, like the thief upon the cross, in faith, resting all their hope upon him, who, by his obedience unto death, is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth, Rom. x. 4. We have greater advantages, in point of light and liberty, than those of old. The prophecies concerning Messiah, which, at the time of delivery, were obscure, are to us infallibly interpreted by their accomplishment. And we know that the great atonement, typically pointed out by their sacrifices, has been actually made; that the Lamb of God has, by the one offering of himself, put away sin. But as to the ground and substance, their faith and hope were the same with ours. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ (John viii. 56); and aged Jacob, soon after he had said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," died with the same composure and willingness as Simeon did, who saw it with his own eyes. Job, who was perhaps contemporary with Jacob, who at least is, with great probability, thought to have lived before Moses, gives us in this passage a strong and clear testimony of his faith. And it forms a beautiful and well chosen introduction to the third part of the Messiah, the principal subject of which is, the present privileges and future prospects of those who believe in the Saviour's name.

The learned are far from being agreed, either in the translation, or in the explanation, of this text. The words *worms* and *body* being printed in Italics in our version, will apprize the attentive English reader, that there are no words answerable to them in the Hebrew. If you omit these words, something will be evidently wanting to make a complete sense. This want different writers have supplied, according to their different judgments, and from hence chiefly has arisen the variety of versions and interpretations. But it would be very improper for me, in this place, to take up your time, and to draw off your attention from the great concerns which should fill our minds when we meet in the house of God, by giving you a detail of controversies and criticisms, which after all are much more uncertain than important. We need not dispute, whether Job, in this passage, professes his assurance of the incarnation of Messiah, or of his resurrection, or of his final appearance to judge the world; or whether he is only declaring his own personal faith and hope in him. These several senses are not so discordant, that if we determine for one, we must exclude the rest. I shall content myself with the words as I find them. And I hope, that if we should miss some of the precise ideas which Job might have when he spoke, we shall not greatly mistake his general meaning, nor wander far wide from the scope of the text.

Four things are observable:

I. The title of *Redeemer*.

II. The appropriating word *My*,

III. His standing upon *the earth*.

IV. Job's expectation of seeing him *in his flesh*.

I. The title. There is no name of Messiah more significant, comprehensive, or endearing, than the name Redeemer. The name of Saviour expresses what he does for sinners. He saves them from guilt and wrath, from sin, from the present evil world, from the powers of darkness, and from all their enemies. He saves them with an everlasting salvation. But the word Redeemer, intimates likewise the manner in which he saves them. For it is not merely by the word of his power, as he saved his disciples when in jeopardy

upon the lake, by saying to the winds and the seas, "Peace, be still: and there was a great calm" (Mark iv. 39); but by price, by paying a ransom for them, and pouring out the blood of his heart, as an atonement for their sins. The Hebrew word for Redeemer, *Goel*, primarily signifies, a near kinsman, or the next of kin; he with whom the right of redemption lay (Numbers xxxv. 19, 21. Ruth iv. 1—3), and who, by virtue of his nearness of relation, was the legal avenger of blood. Thus Messiah took upon him our nature, and by assuming our flesh and blood, became nearly related to us, that he might redeem our forfeited inheritance, restore us to liberty, and avenge our cause against Satan, the enemy and murderer of our souls. But thus he made himself also responsible for us, to pay our debts, and to answer the demands of the justice and law of God on our behalf. He fulfilled his engagement. He suffered, and he died on this account. But our Redeemer, who was once dead, is now alive, and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of death, and of hades, Rev. i. 18. This is he of whom Job saith, I know that he liveth (was then living), though he was not to stand upon the earth, until the latter day. He is the living One, having life in himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. Such was his own language to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58. Therefore the Redeemer is mighty, and his redemption is sure. He is able to save to the uttermost. His power is unlimited, and his official authority, as Mediator, is founded in a covenant, ratified by his own blood, and by the oath of the unchangeable God, Ps. cx. 4.

II. But Job uses the language of appropriation. He says, *My* Redeemer. And all that we know, or hear, or speak of him, will avail us but little, unless we are really and personally interested in him as our Redeemer. A cold speculative knowledge of the gospel, such as a lawyer has of a will or a deed, which he reads with no farther design than to understand the tenor and import of the writing, will neither save nor comfort the soul. The believer reads it, as the will is read by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it to call the estate and all the particulars specified his own. He appropriates the privileges to himself, and says, the promises are mine; the pardon, the peace, the heaven, of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and testament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Testator remembered me in his will, which is confirmed, and rendered valid by his death (Heb. ix. 16), and therefore I humbly claim, and assuredly expect, the benefit of all that he has bequeathed. But how shall we obtain this comfortable persuasion, and preserve it against all the cavils of our enemies, who will endeavour to litigate our right? I seem to have before me a proper occasion of discussing a point, very important, and by too many misunderstood; I mean, the nature of that assurance of hope, which the scripture speaks of as attainable, which has been happily experienced by many believers, and which all are exhorted and encouraged to seek after, in the methods of God's appointment. But my plan will only permit me to offer a few brief hints upon the subject.

1. Many respectable writers and preachers have considered this assurance as essential to true faith. But we have the scripture in our hands, and are not bound to abide by the decisions of any man, farther than as they agree with this standard. The most eminent properties, or effects ascribed to faith, are, that it works by love (Gal. v. 6), purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9), and overcomes the world, 1 John v. 4. I think it cannot easily be denied, by those who are competent judges in the case, that there are persons to be found, who give these evidences that they are believers, and yet are far from the possession of an abiding assurance. They hope they love the Lord, but there is such a disproportion between the sensible exercise of their love, and the conviction they have of their obligations to him, that they are often afraid they do not love him supremely; and if not, they know that in the scriptural sense they do not love him at all. They can say from their hearts that they desire to love him, but they dare not go farther. But there is a weak and a strong faith; they differ not in kind, but only in degree. Faith is compared to a grain of mustard-seed (Matt. xvii. 20), which, under the cultivation of the heavenly Husbandman, who first sows the seed in the heart, grows up to assurance. But in its infant and weak state it is true and acceptable faith. Far from breaking the bruised reed (Is. xlii. 3), he will strengthen it. He will not quench the smoaking flax, but will in due time fan it into a flame.

2. I will go a step farther. Were I to define the assurance we are speaking of, I should perhaps say, it is, in our present state, the combined effect of faith and ignorance. That assurance which does not spring from true faith in the Son of God, wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is no better than presumption. But I believe what we call assurance, even when it is right, is not entirely owing to the strength of our faith, but in a great measure to our having such faint and slight views of some truths, which, if we had a more powerful impression of them, unless our faith was likewise proportionably strengthened at the same time, might possibly make the strongest assurance totter and tremble. I will explain myself. Admitting that I had a right to tell you, that I am so far assured of my interest in the gospel-salvation, as to have no perplexing doubt either of my

acceptance or of my perseverance, you would much over-rate me, if you should suppose this was a proof that my faith is very strong. Alas! I have but a very slight perception of the evil of sin, of the deceitfulness of my own heart, of the force and subtlety of my spiritual enemies, of the strictness and spirituality of the holy law, or of the awful majesty and holiness of the great God with whom I have to do. If, in the moment while I am speaking to you, he should be pleased to impress these solemn realities upon my mind, with a conviction and evidence tenfold greater than I have ever known hitherto (which I conceive would still be vastly short of the truth), unless my faith was also strengthened by a tenfold clearer and more powerful discovery of the grace and glory of the Saviour, you would probably see my countenance change and my speech faulter. The Lord, in compassion to our weakness, shews us these things by little and little, as we are able to bear them; and if, as we advance in the knowledge of ourselves and of our dangers, our knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ advances equally, we may rejoice in hope, we may even possess an assured hope. But let not him who hath put on his harness, boast as though he had put it off, 1 Kings xx. 11. We are yet in an enemy's land, and know not what changes we may meet with, before our warfare is finished.

3. How far our assurance is solid, may be estimated by the effects. It will surely make us humble, spiritual, peaceful, and patient. I pity those who talk confidently of their hope, as if they were out of the reach of doubts and fears, while their tempers are unsanctified, and their hearts are visibly attached to the love of the present world. I fear they know but little of what they say. I am better pleased when persons of this character complain of doubts and darkness. It proves at least that they are not destitute of feeling, nor, as yet, lulled into a spirit of careless security. And there are professors, whom, instead of endeavouring to comfort in their present state, I would rather wish to make still more suspicious of themselves than they are; till they are convinced of the impossibility of enjoying true peace, while their hearts are divided between God and the world. For though sanctification is not the ground of a good hope, it is the certain concomitant of it. If it be true, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14), it must likewise be true, that without holiness no man can have a scriptural and well-founded hope of seeing him.

4. But to give a direct answer to the inquiry, How shall I know that he is my Redeemer? I may use the prophet's words, "Then shall ye know, if you follow on to know the Lord," Hos. vi. 3. Our names are not actually inserted in the Bible, but our characters are described there. He is the Redeemer of all who put their trust in him. You will not trust in him, unless you feel your need of him; you cannot, unless you know him, as he is revealed in the word; you do not unless you love him, and are devoted to his cause and service. If you know yourself to be a sinner deserving to perish, if you see that there is no help or hope for you but in Jesus, and venture yourself upon his gracious invitation, believing that he is able to save to the uttermost; and if you really include holiness and a deliverance from sin, in the idea of the salvation which you long for, then he is your Redeemer. If, among us, an act of grace was published, inviting all criminals to surrender themselves, with a promise of mercy to those who did; though no one was mentioned by name in the act, yet every one who complied with it, and pleaded it, would be entitled to the benefit. Such an act of grace is the gospel. The Lord says, "This is my beloved Son, hear him," Matth. iii. 17. If you approve him, he is yours. If you are still perplexed with doubts, they are owing to the weakness of your faith. But there are means appointed for the growth of faith. Wait patiently upon the Lord in the use of those means, and you shall find he has not bid you seek his face in vain. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Live not in the omission of known duty. Do not perplex yourself with vain reasonings, but believe and obey, and the Lord shall be with you. There are some peculiar cases. Allowances must be made for the effects of constitution and temperament. Some sincere persons are beset and followed, through life, with distressing temptations. But in general, simplicity and obedience lead to assurance. And they who hearken to the Lord, and walk in the way of his commandments, go on from strength to strength (Isa. xlviii. 18); their peace and hope increase, like a river, which from small beginnings, runs broader and deeper, till it falls into the ocean. But to return to Job—

III. Another article of his creed concerning the Redeemer, is, He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. The latter or last days, in the prophetical style, usually denote the Messiah's day, the times of the gospel. To this time Job looked forward. He beheld the promises afar off. Thus Messiah was the consolation of his people of old, as he who was to come. And it should be our consolation, to know that he is come. His standing upon the earth may include the whole of his appearance in the flesh; his life, passion, and resurrection. The manner of expression intimates something important and wonderful. Had Job, in the spirit of prophecy, spoken of any individual of Adam's race, of Isaiah, or Paul, there would have been nothing extraordinary predicted by saying he shall stand upon the earth, for all men do so in their successive generations. But that the Redeemer, the Lord of glory, the Maker of all things

should condescend to visit his creatures, to dwell with men for a season, to stand and walk upon the earth with them, clothed in a body like their own, is an event which never could have been expected, if it had not been revealed from heaven. It was the object of Job's faith, and well deserving the solemn preface with which he introduces his firm persuasion of it, "Oh! that my words were graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever!" When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord of Hosts, instead of admiring the magnificence of the building, he was struck with the condescension of the Lord, who would vouchsafe to notice it, and honour it with a symbol of his presence, "Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less this house which I have built!" 1 Kings viii. 27. But what was the visible glory which appeared in that temple, if compared with the glory of the only begotten Son of God, when he tabernacled in our flesh! The human nature of Christ is that true temple, not made with hands, in which God is manifested upon a throne of grace, that sinners may approach him without dismay, and receive, out of his fulness, grace for grace. To him all the prophets gave witness, on him the desire and hope of his people, in all ages, have been fixed. He was to stand upon the earth, as Mediator between God and man. And in the same office, now he is upon the throne of glory, he is, and will be, admired, adored, and trusted in, by all his believing people, to the end of time.

IV. From the Redeemer's appearance upon earth, Job infers the restoration and resurrection of his own body. His trials had been great—bereaved of his children and substance, afflicted with grievous boils, harassed with temptations, reproached by his friends: out of all these troubles the Lord his Redeemer delivered him, and his latter days were more prosperous than his beginning. But he knew that he must go the way of all the earth, that his body must lie in the grave, and return to dust. But he expected a future time after his dissolution, when in the flesh, for himself, and with his own eyes, he should see God. The expressions are strong and repeated. He does not speak the language of hesitation and doubt, but of confidence and certainty. It likewise appears that he placed his ultimate happiness in seeing God. His words are not very different from those of the apostle, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. To behold the glory of God, as our Redeemer, to be in a state of favour and communion with him, and, according to the utmost capacity of our nature, to be conformed to him in holiness and love, is that felicity which God has promised, and to which all his servants aspire. Some foretastes of it they enjoy in the present life, which cheer them under their trials, and raise them above the grovelling pursuits of those who have their portion only in this world. But their chief possession is in hope. They look forward to a brighter period, when they shall awaken from the sleep of death, to behold his face in righteousness, Ps. xvii. 15. Then, and not till then, they shall be completely satisfied. The expectation of Job, therefore, affords a sufficient proof that the doctrines of an immortal state, and of a resurrection unto life, were included in the revelations which God afforded to his people in the earliest times, and, consequently, that the religion of the Old Testament and of the New is substantially the same.

The great inquiry this subject should impress upon us, is, are we thus minded? What think you, my dear friends, of Christ? Have you accepted him as your Redeemer; and have you a good hope that you shall see him to your comfort, when he shall return to judge the world? If so, you may rejoice. Changes you must expect. You must die, and your flesh must be food for worms. But he has promised to "change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself, Phil. iii. 21.

SERMON XL.

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept — 1 Cor. xv 20.

As, in the animal economy, the action of the heart and of the lungs, though very different, are equally necessary for the maintenance of life, and we cannot say that either of them is more essentially requisite than the other; so in the system of divine revelation, there are some truths, the knowledge and belief of which singly considered, are fundamentals with respect to the salvation of a sinner. And though they are distinct in themselves, we cannot determine which of them is of most importance to us; for unless we know, approve, and receive them all, we can have no experience of a life of faith in the Son of God. Such, for instance, is the scriptural doctrine concerning the depravity of human nature. This is a first principle; for unless we understand what our state is in the sight of God, the enormity of our transgressions, and our incapacity for true happiness, until our hearts are changed by the power of his grace, we cannot rightly understand a single chapter in the Bible. Such, likewise, is the doctrine of the atonement. For, if we could know how to

ally we are lost, without knowing the gracious method which God has appointed for our recovery, we must unavoidably sink into despair. Again, if we were sensible of our state as sinners, and even if we trusted in Christ for salvation, yet the apostle observes in this chapter, that unless he be indeed risen from the dead, our faith in him would be in vain, and we should still be in our sins. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is a doctrine absolutely essential to our hope and comfort; and it is likewise a sure pledge, that they who believe in him shall be raised from the dead also, by virtue of their union with him, and according to his pattern. For "now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept." Let us at present consider his resurrection.—The sure consequence of it, that his people shall be raised from the dead, will offer to our meditations from the following verses.

The resurrection of Christ, being, as a fact, the great pillar upon which the weight and importance of Christianity rest, it has pleased the Lord to put the indubitable proof of it within our power. There is no one point of ancient uninspired history so certainly and unquestionably authenticated. It may seem unnecessary to prove it, and to many of you it is entirely so. Yet I think it proper to take some notice of it; not so much on account of the weak and trifling cavils of infidels, as for the sake of persons who may be assaulted with temptations. For many plain people, who are not much acquainted with the subtilties of sceptics, are sometimes pestered with difficulties and objections in their own minds, perhaps more shrewd and powerful than such as are commonly found in books, or retailed in coffee-houses. For unbelief is deeply rooted in every heart; and Satan, our great enemy, can, and if permitted, will, work powerfully upon this evil disposition. He endeavours to beat us off from the belief of every truth of scripture, and of this among the rest. And many persons who have been so well convinced that our Lord rose from the dead, as to venture their souls and their all upon it, have found themselves at a loss how to answer the enemy in an hour of sharp and pressing temptation.

Let us suppose, then, that we had lately received the news of some extraordinary and almost incredible event, and let us consider what evidence we should require to satisfy us that the report was true, and apply the same kind of reasoning to the point in hand. That there was, a great while ago, a person named Jesus, who gathered disciples, and died upon a cross, is universally acknowledged. Both Jews and Heathens, who lived at the time, and afterwards, not only admitted it, but urged it as a reproach against his followers. Many testimonies of this kind are still extant.

The turning point between his enemies and his friends, is his resurrection. This has been denied. We acknowledge that he did not appear publicly after he arose, as he did before his death, but only to a competent number of his followers, to whom he shewed himself, and satisfied them, by many infallible proofs, that he was alive, and that he was the same person whom they had seen crucified. They reported what they saw, and we believe their report. We are therefore to inquire, Who they were? and on what grounds we receive and rely upon their testimony?

If they were mistaken themselves, or if they were engaged and agreed in a crafty design of imposing upon mankind, we, who depend upon their relation, may be involved in their mistake, or deceived by their artifice. But if neither of these suppositions can possibly be true, if they were competent and impartial witnesses; then we are not only justified in giving credit to their testimony, but it must be unreasonable, and (in a case of this importance) presumptuous, and dangerous to reject it.

I. That they were competent judges of what they asserted, is evident,

1. From their numbers.—The eye-witnesses of this fact were many. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once: after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also," 1 Cor. xv. 5—8. Thus Paul wrote when multitudes who lived at the time were still living, and would readily have contradicted him, if he had declared an untruth. Five hundred concurring witnesses are sufficient to establish the credit of a fact, which they all saw with their own eyes, if their word may be depended upon. We can be certain of things which we never saw no otherwise than by the testimony of others. And certainty may be attained in this way. For though some persons would appropriate the word demonstration to mathematical evidence, yet moral evidence may be in many cases equally conclusive, and compel assent with equal force. I am so fully satisfied by the report of others, that there are such cities as Paris or Rome, though I never saw them, that I am no more able seriously to question their existence, than I am to doubt the truth of a proposition in Euclid which I have seen demonstrated.

2. From the nature of the fact, in which it was not possible that so many persons could be mistaken or deceived. Some of them saw him, not once only, but frequently. His appearance to others was attended with peculiar striking circumstances and effects. His disciples seem not to have expected his resurrection, though he had often foretold it previous to his sufferings. Nor did they hastily credit the women who first saw him in their way from the sepulchre. Thomas refused to believe the report of all his brethren, to whom

our Lord had shewn himself. He would see for himself; he required more than ocular proof, for he said, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," John xx. 25. It is no wonder, that when these proofs were offered him, he fully yielded to conviction, and with gratitude and joy addressed his risen Saviour in the language of adoration and love, "My Lord, and my God!" But his former conduct shewed that he was not credulous, nor disposed to receive the report as a truth, however desirable, without sufficient evidence.

II. As they were competent judges, so they were upright and faithful witnesses. There is no more room to suspect that they had a design to deceive others, than that they were mistaken or deceived themselves. For,

1. If we judge of them by their writings, we must at least allow them to have been well-meaning men. They profess to aim at promoting the knowledge and honour of the true God, and thereby to promote the morality and happiness of mankind. Their conduct was uniformly consistent with their profession, and their doctrines and precepts were evidently suited to answer their design. The penmen of the New Testament were confessedly men in private life, most of them destitute of literature, and engaged in low occupations, till they became the disciples of Jesus. Is it probable that men, who speak so honourably of God, who inculcate upon their fellow-creatures such an entire devotedness to his will and service, should be impostors themselves? Is it at all credible, that a few men, in an obscure situation, should form a consistent and well concerted plan, sufficient to withstand and overcome the prejudices, habits, and customs, both of Jews and Heathens; to institute a new religion, and, without the assistance of interest or arms, to spread it rapidly and successfully in a few years throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire? Or is it possible that such men could, at their first effort, exhibit a scheme of theology and morality, so vastly superior to the united endeavours of the philosophers of all ages? A learned man in France attempted to prove (for what will not learned men attempt?) that most of the Latin poems which are attributed to those whom we call the classic writers, and particularly the Æneid of Virgil, were not the production of the authors whose names they bear, but gross forgeries, fabricated by monks in the dark ages of ignorance, and successfully obtruded upon the world as genuine, till he arose to detect the imposture. He gained but few proselytes to his absurd paradox. Yet, to suppose that men who could only express their own dull sentiments in barbarous Latin, were capable of writing with the fire and elegance of Virgil, when they undertook to impose upon the world; or to affirm that the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was in reality written by an ignorant plowman, and only sent abroad under the sanction of a celebrated name, cannot be more repugnant to true taste, sound judgment, and common sense, than to imagine, that the Evangelists and Apostles were, from their own resources, capable of writing such a book as the New Testament; the whole of which must stand or fall with the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection.

2. But farther, they could not possibly propose any advantage to themselves in their endeavours to propagate the christian religion, if they had not been assured that the crucified Jesus, whom they preached, was risen from the dead, and had taken possession of his kingdom. Knowing whom they had believed, filled with a constraining sense of his love, and depending upon his promise and power to support them in the service to which he had called them, they were neither ashamed nor afraid to proclaim his gospel, and to invite and enjoin sinners everywhere to put their trust in him; otherwise they had nothing to expect but such treatment as they actually met with, for professing their belief of his resurrection, and especially for the pains they took to publish it, first among the people who had put him to death, and afterwards among the Heathens. It required no great sagacity to foresee that this doctrine would be an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, 1 Cor. i. 23. They were in fact despised, hated, opposed, and persecuted, wherever they went; and those who espoused their cause were immediately exposed to a participation in their sufferings. Nor was there the least probability that the event could be otherwise. Impostures there have been many; but we cannot conceive that any set of men would deliberately, and by consent, contrive an imposture, which, in the nature of the thing, could procure nothing to them, or to their followers, but contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

3. Even if we could for a moment suppose them capable of so wild and wicked an undertaking, as, under pretence of the service of God, to provoke and dare the hatred of mankind, by asserting and propagating an offensive falsehood, it would be impossible upon that ground to account for the success which they met with. If this counsel and cause had not been of God, it must have come to nought, Acts v. 38. But by preaching Jesus and his resurrection, in defiance of all the arts and rage of their enemies, they mightily prevailed over the established customs and inveterate prejudices of mankind, and brought multitudes into the belief of their doctrine against all disadvantages. The Lord confirmed their word with signs following. The miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus were numerous, notorious, and undeniable; and the moral effects of their preaching, though

too frequent and universal to be styled miraculous, were such as can only be with reason ascribed to a divine power. The pillars of Paganism, the superstitions of idol worship, though in every country connected and incorporated with the frame of civil government, and guarded for ages, not more by popular veneration than for reasons of state, were very soon shaken, and in no great space of time subverted. Within about two hundred years after Tacitus had described the Christians as the objects of universal contempt and hatred, christianity became the established religion of the empire. And in a letter of Pliny to Trajan on the subject, we have indisputable evidence, that even in the time of Tacitus, hated, vilified, and persecuted, as the Christians were, their religion so greatly prevailed, that in many places the idol temples were almost deserted.

4. But the proof of the resurrection of Christ, which is the most important and satisfactory of any, does not depend upon arguments and historical evidence, with which multitudes of true christians are unacquainted, but is, in its own nature, equally convincing in all ages, and equally level to all capacities. They who have found the gospel to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls, have the witness in themselves; and are very sure that the doctrine, which enlightened their understandings, awakened their conscience, delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin, brought them into a state of peace and communion with God, and inspired them with a bright and glorious hope of eternal life, must be true. They know that the Lord is risen indeed, because they are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, and have experienced a change in themselves, which could only be wrought by the influence of that Holy Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow. And many believers, though not qualified to dispute with philosophers and sceptics upon their own learned ground, can put them to shame and to silence, by the integrity and purity of their conduct, by their patience and cheerfulness under afflictions; and would especially silence them, if they were eye-witnesses of the composure and elevation of spirit with which true believers in a risen Saviour welcome the approach of death.

This is the evidence which I would principally recommend to my hearers to seek after. If the resurrection of Christ be a truth and a fact, much depends upon the right belief of it. I say a right belief; for though I have offered you a brief view of the external evidence in proof of this point, I am aware that I am not preaching to Jews or Mahommedans. If I should ask you, Believest thou the resurrection? Might I not answer myself, as the apostle did on another occasion, "I know that thou believest?" Acts xxvi. 27. But so powerful is the effect of our depravity, that it is possible, yea very common, for people most certainly to believe the truth of a proposition, so as not to be able to entertain a doubt of it, and yet to act as if they could demonstrate it to be false. Let me ask you, for instance Do you believe that you shall die? I know that you believe it. But do you indeed live, as if you were really assured of the certainty of death, and (which is equally undeniable) the uncertainty of life? So in the present case —If Christ be risen from the dead, according to the scriptures, then all that the scripture declares of the necessity and design of his sufferings, of his present glory, and of his future advent, must be true likewise. What a train of weighty consequences depend upon his resurrection! If he rose from the dead, then he is the Lord of the dead and of the living— then he has the keys of death and hades— then he will return to judge the world, and you must see him for yourself, and appear at his tribunal—then, it is he with whom you have to do—and then, finally, unless you really love, trust, and serve him, unless he is the beloved and the Lord of your heart, your present state is awfully dangerous and miserable.

But let those who love his name be joyful in him: your Lord who was dead, is alive, and because he liveth, you shall live also. If ye be risen with him, seek the things which are above, where he sitteth on the right hand of God. And, when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

SERMON XLI.

DEATH BY ADAM, LIFE BY CHRIST.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

From Mr. Handel's acknowledged abilities as a composer, and particularly from what I have heard of his great taste and success in adapting the style of his music to the subject, I judge that this passage afforded him a fair occasion of displaying his genius and powers. Two ideas, vastly important in themselves, are here represented in the strongest light, by being placed in contrast to each other. Surely the most solemn, the most pathetic strains must be employed, if they accord with the awful words, "By man came death,"— "In Adam all die." Nor can even the highest efforts of the heavenly harpers, more than answer to the joy, the triumph, and the praise which the other part of my text would excite in our hearts, if we are interested in it, provided we were capable of comprehending the

full force and meaning of the expressions, "By man came also the resurrection,"—"In Christ shall all be made alive."

By one man came death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," Rom. v. 12. Sin opened the door to death. The creation, at the beginning, was full of order and beauty. "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good," Gen. i. 31. Adam, happy in the image and favour of his maker, breathed the air of immortality in paradise. While moral evil was unknown, natural evils, such as sickness, pain, and death had no place. How different has the state of things been since! Would you account for the change? Charge it upon man. He sinned against his Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor, and thus, by him, came death. The fact is sure, and therefore our reasonings upon it, in order to account for it, farther than we are enlightened and taught by scripture, are unnecessary and vain. God is infinitely wise, and therefore this change was foreseen by him. He doubtless could have prevented it, for to omnipotence every thing that does not imply a contradiction is possible, is easy. But he permitted it, and therefore it must have been agreeable to his wisdom, holiness, and goodness to permit it. He can over-rule it to the purposes of his own glory, and to ends worthy of himself, and he has assured us that he will do so. Thus far I can go, nor do I wish to go farther. And to endeavour to vindicate the ways of God to man, to fallen man, upon the grounds of what he proudly calls his reason, would be an impracticable, and, in my view, a presumptuous attempt. In proportion as his grace enlightens our minds, convinces us of our ignorance, and humbles our pride, we shall be satisfied, that in whatever he appoints or permits, he acts in a manner becoming his own perfections. Nor can we be satisfied in any other way. We see, we feel that evil is in the world. Death reigns. It has pleased God to afford us a revelation, to visit us with the light of his gospel. If, instead of reasoning, we believe and obey, a way is set before us, by which we may finally overcome every evil, and obtain a happiness and honour, superior to what belonged to man in his original state. They who refuse his gospel must be left to their cavils and perplexities, until the day in which the great Judge and Governor of all shall arise to plead his own cause, and to vindicate his proceedings from their arrogant exceptions. Then every mouth will be stopped, Job xxxv. 5. Let us look to the heavens, which are higher than we, and attend to what we may learn from sure principles, that the earth with all its inhabitants, is but as dust upon the balance, if compared with the immensity of God's creation. Unless we could know the whole, and the relation which this very small part bears to the rest of his government, we must be utterly incompetent to judge how it becomes the great God to act. We are infected with the sin, and we are subject to the death, with all its concomitant evils, which came into the world by the first man. But we are likewise invited to a participation of all the blessings which the second Man has procured, by his atonement for sin, and by his victory over death. "For as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection from the dead."

Let us take a survey, first of the malady, and then of the remedy.

I. The malady, the effect and wages of sin, is death. Many ideas are included in this word, taken in the scriptural sense.

1. The sentence annexed to the transgression of that commandment which was given as an especial test of Adam's obedience, and which affects all his posterity, is thus expressed, "In the day that thou eatest—thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17. But man was not, ordinarily, to die by a stroke of apoplexy, or by a flash of lightning. The sentence includes all the natural evils, all the variety of woe which sin has brought into the world. The rebellious tempers and appetites which so often cut short the life of man, together with the sufferings and troubles, which, sooner or later, bring him down with sorrow to the grave, being the consequences of sin, may be properly considered as belonging to that death in which they terminate. Even the earth and the elements partook in the effects of man's disobedience. Thorns and thistles were not the produce of the ground till after he had sinned, Gen. iii. 18. Nor can I suppose that hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes were known in a state of innocence. But had the whole earth been a paradise, man having sinned must have been miserable. It is not in situation to make that heart happy, which is the seat of inordinate passions, rage, envy, malice, lust, and avarice. And were the earth a paradise now, it would be stained with blood, and filled with violence, cruelty, and misery, while it is inhabited by sinners. Many persons at present, who dwell in stately houses, and have every thing around them that is suited to gratify and please their senses, know by painful experience, how little happiness these external advantages afford, while their minds are tortured with disappointments and anxiety. Thus the outward afflictions which everywhere surround and assail the sinner, and the malignant passions, which, like vultures, continually gnaw his heart, all combine to accelerate the execution of the sentence of death.

2. Death, in a very important sense, entered immediately with sin. Besides the rational life which still distinguishes man from the brute creation, he originally possessed a spiritual and divine life, for he was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true

holiness. He was capable of communion with God, of rejoicing in his favour, and of proposing his will and glory as the great end of his actions. In a word, the presence and life of God dwelt in him as in a temple. As the soul is the life of the body, which becomes a carcase, a prey to worms and putrefaction, when the soul has forsaken it, so God is the life of the soul. Sin defaced his temple, and he forsook it. In this sense, when Adam had transgressed the law, he died instantly, in that very day, in that very moment. He lost his spiritual life, he lost all desire for communion with God, he no longer retained any love for his benefactor. He dreaded his presence, he sought to hide himself from him, and when obliged to appear and answer, stood self-condemned before him, till revived and restored by the promise of grace. And thus his posterity derive from him what may be called a living death. They are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii. 1), till they are again quickened by his Holy Spirit. This is not a subject of common-place declamation; it is to be proved by the tenor of scripture, the nature of redemption, and the very reason of things. Unless we allow that man in his present state is thus fallen, depraved, and dead, we must be reduced to the absurdity of supposing that God made him such a creature as he now is; that when he formed him for himself, and endued him with a capacity and desires which nothing short of his own infinite goodness can satisfy, he should at the same time create him with a disposition to hate his Maker, to seek his satisfaction in sensuality upon a level with the brutes, and to confine his views and pursuits within the limits of this precarious life, while he feels, in defiance of himself, an instinctive thirst for immortality. Man considered in this view would be a solecism in the creation; and they who do not acquiesce in the cause which the scripture assigns for the inconsistencies and contradictions which are found in his character, will never be able to assign any other cause, which will bear the trial of sober and rational examination. What the poet says of Beelzebub, "majestic though in ruins," may be truly affirmed of man. His faculties and powers are proofs of his original greatness; his awful misapplication of them equally prove that he is a fallen and ruined creature. He has lost his true life, he is dead in sin; and unless renewed and revived by the grace of God, can only, in a future state, be fit for the company of the fallen angels.

3. Death, as the wages of sin, extends still farther. There is the second death, the final and eternal misery of soul and body in hell. This we know is the dreadful lot of the impenitent. We need no other proof that this was included in the sentence; for certainly, the righteous Judge would not inflict a greater punishment than he had denounced. Indeed, it follows of course in the very nature of things, if we admit the soul to be immortal, a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, and that there remains no other sacrifice for sin, in favour of those who reject the gospel. For to be disowned of God in the great day, to be separated from his favourable presence, and conscious of his endless displeasure; to be abandoned to the unrestrained rage of sinful dispositions and hopeless despair; to be incessantly tormented by the stings of a remorseful conscience, must be, upon the principles of scripture, the unavoidable consequences of being cut off by death, in an unhumbled, unpardoned, unsanctified state.

II. But, blessed be God, the gospel reveals a relief and remedy fully adapted to the complicated misery in which sin has involved us. "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Messiah has made an end of sin, and destroyed the power of death. They who believe in him, though they were dead shall live. John xi. 25. For he is the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the living.

1. He raises the soul from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness. By his blood he procures a right and liberty, and by his Spirit he communicates a power, that those who were afar off, may draw nigh to God. Thus, even at present, believers are said to be risen with him, Col. iii. 1. Their spiritual life is renewed, and their happiness is already commenced, though it be as yet subject to abatements.

(1.) Though when they are made partakers of his grace, and thereby delivered from the condemning power of the law, sin has no longer dominion over them, as formerly; yet it still wars and strives within them, and their life is a state of continual warfare. They now approve the law of God, as holy, just, and good, and delight in it after the inward man (Rom. vii. 12—19), yet they are renewed but in part. They feel a law in their members warring against the law of their minds. They cannot do the things that they would, nor as they would; for when they would do good, evil is present with them. They are conscious of a defect and a defilement attending their best services. Their attainments are unspeakably short of the desires which love to the Redeemer has raised in their hearts. They are ashamed, and sometimes almost discouraged. They adopt the apostle's language, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? But with him they can likewise say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." They know he is on their side, and expect that he will at last make them more than conquerors: yet while the conflict lasts, they have much to suffer, and much to lament.

(2.) They are subject, like other people, to the various calamities and distresses incident

to this state of mortality; and they have, more or less, troubles peculiar to themselves, arising from the nature of their profession and conduct (if they are faithful to their Lord) while they live in a world that lieth in wickedness. But the curse and sting is taken out of their afflictions, and they are so moderated and sanctified by the wisdom and grace of him whom they serve, that in the event they work for their good. But though they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. xii. 11) in themselves, and at the time, they are not joyous, but grievous.

(3.) They are still subject to the stroke of death, the separation of soul and body. But this death has lost its sting as to them. And therefore they are said not to die, but to sleep in Jesus. Death is not their enemy, but their friend. To them, instead of being an evil, it proves a deliverance from all evil, and an entrance into everlasting life.

2. That new life to which they are raised is surely connected with life eternal; the life of grace, with the life of glory. For Christ liveth in them, and being united to him by faith, they shall live while he liveth. They only shut their eyes upon the pains and sorrows of this world, to open them immediately in his presence, and so they shall be for ever with the Lord. How wonderful and happy is the transition! From disease and anguish, from weeping friends, and often from a state of indigence and obscurity, in which they have no friends to compassionate them, they remove to a state of glory, honour and immortality, to a mansion in the realms of light, to a seat near the throne of God. In the language of mortals, this ineffable honour and happiness is shadowed out to us, by the emblems of a white robe, a golden harp, a palm-branch (the token of victory), and a crown, not of oak or laurel, of gold or diamonds, but a crown of life. Such honour have all the saints. However afflicted or neglected, despised or oppressed, while upon earth, soon as their willing spirits take their flight from hence, they shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Thus Lazarus lay for a time, diseased, necessitous, and slighted, at the rich man's gate. Yet he was not without attendants. A guard of angels waited around him, and when he died conveyed his spirit into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. The Jews thought very highly of Abraham, the father of their nation, the father of the faithful. Our Lord therefore teaches us by this representation, that the beggar Lazarus was not only happy after death, but highly exalted by him who seeth not as man seeth; for he was placed in Abraham's bosom, a situation which, according to the custom of the Jews, was a mark of peculiar favour, intimacy, and distinction. Thus the beloved disciple was seated in the bosom of our Lord, when he celebrated his last passover with his disciples, John xiii. 22—25.

3. Their dead bodies shall be raised at the great day, not in their former state of weakness and corruption, but that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power, and the mortal shall put on immortality. He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned according to the likeness of his own glorious body. So that his own resurrection is both the pledge and the pattern of theirs. I have only farther to observe upon this subject at present, that as Adam is the root and head of all mankind, from whence they all derive a sinful and mortal nature; so Jesus, the second Adam, is the root of a people who are united to him, planted and engrafted in him by faith. To these the resurrection, considered as a blessing, is to be restrained. There will be a resurrection of the wicked likewise (John v. 29), but to condemnation, shame and everlasting contempt, Dan. xii. 2. But the connection is close and indissoluble between Christ the first-fruits, and them that are Christ's at his coming.

May we be happily prepared for this great event, that when he shall appear we may have confidence in him, and not be ashamed before him, 1 John ii. 28. Happy they who shall then be able to welcome him in the language of the prophet, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation, Isa. xxv. 9. But how awful the contrast of those (many of them once the great, mighty, and honourable of the earth) who shall behold him with horror, and in the anguish of their souls shall call (in vain) to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his presence, saying, "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 16, 17.

SERMON XLII.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

An object in itself great, and which we know to be so, will appear small to us if we view it from a distance. The stars, for example, in our view, are but as little specks or points of light; and the tip of a finger, if held very near to the eye, is sufficient to hide from us the whole body of the sun. Distance of time has an effect upon us, in its kind, similar to dis-

tance of space. It diminishes in our mind the idea of what we are assured is, in its own nature, of great magnitude and importance. If any of us were informed that we should certainly die before this day closes, what a sudden and powerful change would take place in our thoughts? That we all must die, is a truth, of which we are no less certain, than that we are now alive. But because it is possible that we may not die to-day, or to-morrow, or this year, or for several years to come, we are often little more affected by the thoughts of death, than if we expected to live here for ever. In like manner, if you receive the scripture as a divine revelation, I need offer you no other proof, that there is a day, a great day, approaching, which will put an end to the present state of things, and introduce a state unchangeable and eternal. Then the Lord will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. The earth and all its works will be burnt up. The great Judge will appear, the tribunal be fixed, the books opened, and all the human race must give an account of themselves to God, and, according to his righteous award, be happy or miserable in a degree beyond expression or conception, and that for ever.

If we were infallibly assured, that this tremendous scene would open upon us to-morrow; or if, while I am speaking, we should be startled with the signs of our Lord's coming in the air, what confusion and alarm would overspread the congregation? Yet, if the scripture be true, the hour is approaching, when we must all be spectators of this solemn event, and parties nearly interested in it. But because it is at a distance, we can hear of it, speak of it, and profess to expect it, with a coolness almost equal to indifference. May the Lord give us that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, that while I aim to lead your meditations to the subject of my text, we may be duly impressed by it: and that we may carry from hence such a consideration of our latter end, as may incline our hearts to that which is our true wisdom!

Many curious inquiries and speculations might be started from this passage, but which, because I judge them to be more curious than useful, it is my intention to wave. I shall confine myself to what is plainly expressed, because I wish rather to profit than to amuse my hearers. The principal subject before us is the resurrection of the dead, in the most pleasing view of it; for my text speaks only of those who shall change the mortal and corruptible, for incorruption and immortality.

I. The introduction,—"Behold I show you a mystery."

II. What we are taught to expect,—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

III. The suddenness of the event,—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

IV. The grand preceding signal,—"The trumpet shall sound."

I. The apostle apprizes the Corinthians that he is about to shew them a mystery. As the word mystery has been treated with no small contempt, I shall embrace this occasion of offering you a short explanation of it, as it is used in the scriptures. We are allowed to say, that there are mysteries in nature, and perhaps we may be allowed to speak of mysteries in providence; but though an apostle assures us, that great is the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. iii. 16), many persons will scarcely bear the application of the word to religion. And, a late ingenious writer, who has many admirers in the present day, has ventured to affirm in print, that where mystery begins, religion ends. If the frequency of the case did not, in some degree, abate our wonder, this might seem almost a mystery, that any persons who profess to believe the scripture, should so openly and flatly contradict what the scripture expressly and repeatedly declares: Or that while, as men of reason and philosophy, they are forced to acknowledge a mystery in every part of creation, and must confess it beyond their ability to explain the growth of a blade of grass; they should in opposition to all the rules of analogy, conclude, that the gospel, the most important concern of man, and which is commended to us as the most eminent display of the wisdom and power of God, is the only subject so level to our apprehensions, as to be obvious, at first sight, to the most careless and superficial observers. That great numbers of people are very far from being accurate and diligent in their religious inquiries, is too evident to be denied. How often do we meet with persons of sense who talk with propriety on philosophical, political, or commercial subjects, and yet, when they speak of religion, discover such gross ignorance, as would be shameful in a child of ten years old, and amounts to a full proof that they have not thought it worth their while to acquire even a slight knowledge of its first principles. Can we even conceive the possibility of a divine revelation that should have nothing in it mysterious to persons of this character?

A mystery, according to the notation of the Greek word, signifies a secret. And all the peculiar truths of the gospel may justly be styled mysteries or secrets, for two reasons.

1. Because the discovery of them is beyond the reach of fallen man, and they neither would nor could have been known without a revelation from God. This is eminently true of the resurrection. The light of nature, which we often hear so highly commended, may afford some faint glimmerings of a future state, but gives no intimation of a resurrec

tion. The men of wisdom at Athens, the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, who differed widely in most parts of their respective schemes, united in deriding this sentiment, and contemptuously styled the apostle Paul a babler (Acts xvii. 18) for preaching it. But this secret is to us made known. And we are assured, not only that the Lord will receive to himself the departing spirits of his people, but that he will give commandment concerning their dust, and, in due time, raise their vile bodies to a conformity with his own glorious body.

2. Because, though they are revealed expressly in the scripture, such is the grossness of our conceptions, and the strength of our prejudices, that the truths of revelation are still unintelligible to us, without a farther revelation of their true sense to the mind, by the influence of his Holy Spirit. Otherwise, how can the secret of the Lord be restrained to those who fear him (Psal. xxv. 14), when the book which contains it is open to all, and the literal and grammatical meaning of the words is in the possession of many who fear him not?

Books in the arts and sciences may be said to be full of mysteries to those who have not a suitable capacity and taste for them; or who do not apply themselves to study them with diligence, and patiently submit to learn gradually one thing after another. If you put a treatise on mathematics, or a system of music, into the hands of a plowman or labourer, you will not be surprised to find that he cannot understand a single page. Shall the works of a Sir Isaac Newton, or of a Handel, be thus inexplicable to one person, while another peruses them with admiration and delight? Shall these require a certain turn of mind, and a close attention? and can it be reasonably supposed, that the Bible is the only book that requires no peculiar disposition, or degree of application, to be understood, though it is designed to make us acquainted with the deep things of God? 1 Cor. ii. 10. In one respect, indeed, there is an encouraging difference. Divine truths lie thus far equally open to all, that though none can learn them unless they are taught of God, yet all who are sensible of their own weakness may expect his teaching, if they humbly seek it by prayer. Many people are, perhaps, incapable of being mathematicians. They have not a genius for the science. But there is none who teacheth like God. He can give not only light, but sight; not only lessons, but the capacity necessary for their reception. And while his mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon him for instruction, he reveals them unto babes.

It may perhaps be thought, that a belief of the doctrine of the resurrection does not require the same teaching of the Holy Spirit that is necessary to the right knowledge of some other doctrines of the gospel. But such a belief as may affect, cheer, and animate the heart must be given us from above, for we cannot reason ourselves into it. Nay, this divine teaching is necessary to secure the mind from the vain reasonings, perplexities, and imaginations, which will bewilder our thoughts upon the subject, unless we learn to yield in simplicity of faith, to what the scripture has plainly revealed, and can be content to know no farther before the proper time.

II. What we are here taught to expect is thus expressed—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." We are not to suppose that the whole human race will die, and fall from the earth, before the resurrection. Some will be living at the time, and among them some of the Lord's people. Of the living, it cannot properly be said that they will be raised from the dead: but they will experience a change, which will put them exactly in the same state with the others. Their mortality shall be swallowed up in life. Thus we conceive it to have been with Enoch and Elijah. They did not die like other men; but their mortal natures were frail and sinful, like ours, and incapable of sustaining the glories of heaven without a preparation. Flesh and blood in its present state cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption; but the dead shall arise, and the living shall be changed. Here is a wide field for speculation, but I mean not to enter it. Curiosity would be glad to know how our bodies, when changed, shall still be the same. Let us first determine how that body, which was once an infant, is the very same when it becomes a full grown man, or a man in extreme old age. Let us explain the transmutation of a caterpillar or silk-worm, which from a reptile becomes a butterfly. What a wonderful change is this both in appearance and in powers? Who would suppose it to be the same creature? Yet who can deny it? It is safest and most comfortable for us, to refer to the wisdom and power of God the accomplishment of his own word.

III. These great events will take place unexpectedly and suddenly—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." We have reason to believe, that a part at least of mankind will be employed as they are now, and as they were in the days of Noah and Lot (Luke xvii. 26—30), eating and drinking, buying and selling, building, and planting; having nothing less in their thoughts than the calamity and destruction which shall overwhelm them without warning. For while they are promising themselves peace, the day of the Lord shall come upon them like a thief in the night, unlooked for, and, like the pangs of a labouring woman, unavoidable. "In that day the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted," Is. ii. 6.

So large a part of divine prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, that I apprehend it is not probable that any of us shall be alive when this great and terrible day of the Lord shall be revealed. But are not some of us exposed to a similar dreadful surprise! If you die in your sins, the consequences will be no less deplorable to you, than if you saw the whole frame of nature perishing with you. Alas, what will you do, whither will you flee for help, or where will you leave your glory, if, while you are engrossed by the cares or pleasures of this world, death should arrest you, and summon you to judgment? The rich man in the gospel is not charged with any crimes of peculiar enormity. It is not said that he ground the faces of the poor, or that he, by fraud or oppression, kept back the hire of the labourers who had reaped his harvest; he only rejoiced in his wealth, and in having much goods laid up for many years, and that therefore he might securely eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. Awful disappointment! Thus will it be, sooner or later, with all whose hearts and portions are in this world, but are not rich towards God! Consider this, you that are like minded with him. Tremble at the thought of being found in the number of those who have all their consolation here, and who, when they die, must leave their all behind them. Now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation. Now, if you will seek the Lord, he will be found of you. Now, if you pray for grace and faith, he will answer you. But when once the Master of the house shall arise, and with his own sovereign authoritative hand shall shut the door of his mercy, it will then be in vain, and too late, to say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," Luke xiii. 25.

IV. The great scene will be introduced by a signal—"At the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound." Thus the approach of a king or a judge is usually announced; and the scripture frequently borrows images from our little affairs and customs, and, in condescension to our weakness, illustrates things in themselves too great for our conceptions, by comparing them with those which are more familiar to us.

It will indeed be comparing great things with small, if I attempt to illustrate this sublime idea by local customs which obtain in this kingdom. At a time of assize, when the judges, to whom the administration and guardianship of our laws are entrusted, are making their entrance, expectation is awake, and a kind of reverence and awe is felt, even by those who are not immediately concerned in their inquest. The dignity of their office, the purpose for which they come, the concourse of people, the order of the procession, and the sound of the trumpet, all concur in raising an emotion in the hearts of the spectators. Happy are they then upon whom the inflexible law has no demand! But who can describe the terror with which the sound of the trumpet is heard by the unhappy criminal; and the throbbings of his heart, if he be already convicted in his own conscience, and knows or fears that there is sufficient evidence at hand to fix the fact upon him, and to prove his guilt? For soon the judge will take his seat, the books will be opened, the cause tried, and the criminal sentenced. Many circumstances of this kind are alluded to in the scripture, to assist us in forming some conception of what will take place, when all the race of Adam, small and great, shall stand before the sovereign Judge, the one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. But the concourse, the solemnity, the scrutiny, the event, in the most weighty causes that can come before a human judicature, are mere shadows, and trivial as the sports of children, if compared with the business of this tremendous tribunal. "The Lord himself will descend with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God." What a trumpet will that be, whose sound shall dissolve the frame of nature, and awaken the dead? When the Lord is seated upon his great white throne (Rev. xx. 11), the heavens and the earth shall flee from his presence; but the whole race of mankind shall be assembled before him, each one to give an account of himself, to him, from whose penetrating knowledge no secret can be hidden, and from whose unerring inflexible sentence there can be no appeal. "Where then shall the wicked and the ungodly appear?"

But it will be a joyful day to believers: they shall be separated as the wheat from the tares, and arranged at his right hand. When the Lord shall come, attended by his holy angels, his redeemed people will reassume their bodies, refined and freed from all that was corruptible; and those of them who shall be then living will be changed, and caught up to meet him in the air. He will then own them, approve and crown them, before assembled worlds. Every charge that can be brought against them will be over-ruled, and their plea, that they trusted in him for salvation, be admitted and ratified. They will be accepted and justified. They will shine like the sun in his full train, and attend, as assessors with him, when he shall pass final judgment upon his and their enemies. Then he will be admired in and by them that believe. Their tears will be for ever wiped away, when he shall say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matth. xxv. 34.

Beloved, if these things are so, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? 2 Pet. iii. 11. Should we not give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may be

found of him in peace? He who will then be seated upon the throne of judgment, is to us made known as seated upon a throne of grace. It is time, it is high time, and blessed be God it is not yet too late, to seek his mercy. Still the gospel invites us to hear his voice, and to humble ourselves before him. Once more you are invited, some of you perhaps for the last time: how know you but sickness or death may be at the very door? Consider, Are you prepared? Examine the foundation of your hope,—and do it quickly, impartially, and earnestly, lest you should be cut off in an hour when you are not aware, and perish with a lie in your right hand.

SERMON XLIII.

DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 1 Cor xv 54.

Death, simply considered, is no more than a private idea, signifying a cessation of life, or that what was once living lives no longer. But it has been the general, perhaps the universal custom of mankind to personify it. Imagination gives death a formidable appearance, arms it with a dart, sting, or scythe, and represents it as an active, inexorable, and invincible reality. In this view Death is a great devourer; with his iron tongue he calls for thousands at a meal. He has already swallowed up all the preceding generations of men; all who are now living are marked as his inevitable prey; he is still unsatisfied, and will go on devouring till the Lord shall come. Then this destroyer shall be destroyed; he shall swallow no more, but be swallowed up himself in victory. Thus the scripture accommodates itself to the language and apprehensions of mortals. Farther, the metaphorical usage of the word *swallow* still enlarges and aggrandizes the idea. Thus the earth is said to have opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and his accomplices. Numb. xvi. 32. And thus a pebble, a mill-stone, or a mountain, if cast into the ocean, would be swallowed up, irrecoverably lost and gone, as though they had never been, Rev. xviii. 21. Such shall be the triumphant victory of Messiah in the great day of the consummation of all things. Death in its cause and in its effects, shall be utterly destroyed. Man was created upright, and lived in a paradise, till, by sin, he brought death into the world. From that time death has reigned by sin, and evils abound. But Messiah came to make an end of sin, to destroy death, and him that hath the power of it, to repair every disorder, and to remove every misery; and he will so fully, so gloriously accomplish his great undertaking in the final issue, that every thing contrary to holiness and happiness shall be swallowed up and buried beyond the possibility of a return, as a stone that is sunk in the depths of the sea. Thus where sin hath abounded grace will much more abound.

This victory, however, being the Redeemer's work and the fruit of his mediation, the scripture teaches us to restrain the benefits of it to the subjects of his church and kingdom. In Adam all die. A depraved nature, guilt, sorrow, and death, extend to all his posterity. The All, who in Christ shall be made alive, are those who, by faith in him, are delivered from the sting of death, which is sin, and are made partakers of a new nature. There is a second death, which, though it shall not hurt the believers in Jesus (Rev. ii. 11), will finally swallow up the impenitent and ungodly. We live in an age when there is, if I may so speak, a resurrection of many old and exploded errors, which though they have been often refuted and forgotten, are admired and embraced by some persons as new and wonderful discoveries. Of this stamp, is the conceit of a universal restitution to a state of happiness of all intelligent creatures, whether angels or men, who have rebelled against the will and government of God. This sentiment contradicts the current doctrine of scripture, which asserts the everlasting misery of the finally impenitent, in as strong terms, in the very same terms, as the eternal happiness of the righteous, and sometimes in the very same verse, Mat. xxv. 46. Nor can it possibly be true, if our Lord spake the truth concerning Judas, when he said, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born," Matth. xxvi. 24. If I could consider this notion as harmless though useless, and no worse than many mistakes which men of upright minds have made, through inattention and weakness of judgment, I should not have mentioned it. But I judge it to be little less pernicious and poisonous, than false. It directly tends to abate that sense of the evil of sin, of the inflexible justice of God, and the truth of his threatenings, which is but too weak in the best of men. Let us abide by the plain declarations of his word, which assures us, that there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin (Heb. x. 26, 27), no future relief against it, for those who now refuse the gospel; and that they who cordially receive it shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall one day sing, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

I would farther observe, that many prophecies have a gradual and increasing accomplishment, and may be applied to several periods; though their full completion will only be at the resurrection and last judgment. This passage, as it stands in the prophecy of Isaiah (chap. xxv. 8), from whence the apostle quotes

it, appears to have a reference to the comparatively brighter light and glory of the gospel-state beyond what was enjoyed by the church under the Levitical dispensation; and especially to the privileges of those happy days, when the fulness of the Gentiles, and the remnant of Israel shall be brought in, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. I would not exclude these subordinate senses; I have already considered them. But my text calls our attention to the end of all things. Then, in the most emphatical sense, Death will be swallowed up of victory.

Let us endeavour to realize the great scene before us, to contemplate the redeemed of the Lord when they shall return with him to animate their glorious bodies. Let us ask the question which the elder proposed to John, "Who are these clothed with white robes, and whence came they?" Rev. vii. 13. They came out of great tribulation, they were once under the power of death, but now death, as to them, is swallowed up in victory. In every sense in which death ruled over them they are now completely delivered.

I. They were once dead in law. They had revolted from their Maker. They had violated the holy order of his government, and stood exposed to his righteous displeasure, and to the heavy penalty annexed to the transgression of his commandments. But mercy interposed. God so loved them, that he gave his only begotten Son to make an atonement for their sins, and to be their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. They received grace to believe in this Saviour, and now they are delivered from condemnation. They are accepted in the Beloved. They are considered as one with him, and interested in all that he did, and in all that he suffered. Now they are the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. Though they were afar off, they are brought nigh, and admitted to a nearer relation than the holy angels, to him who sitteth upon the throne. For he took upon him, and still he pleased to wear, not the nature of angels, but the human nature. Their former guilt is cancelled, blotted out, and swallowed up. All their sins are covered. Sunk in his precious blood as in a deep sea, so that even if sought for, they can no more be found. That they have sinned, will always be a truth; and probably they will never lose a consciousness of what they were by nature and practice while in this world. But this, so far from abating their joy, will heighten their gratitude and praise to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5. Their happiness principally consists in a perception of his love to them, and in their returns of grateful love to him. And they love him much, because for his sake, much has been forgiven them, Luke vii. 47.

II. Once they were dead in sin. They were destitute of the knowledge and love of God. They were foolish, deceived, and disobedient, enslaved to divers lusts (Titus iii. 3), to inordinate, sensual, unsatisfying pleasures. They lived in malice and envy; they were hateful, and they hated one another. In a word, they were dead while they lived, 1 Tim. v. 6. But by the power of grace they were awakened and raised from this death, and made partakers of a new, a spiritual, and divine life. Yet the principle of sin and death still remained in them, and their life upon earth, though a life of faith in the Son of God, was a state of continual warfare. They had many a conflict, and were often greatly distressed. They sowed in tears, to the end of their pilgrimage, but now they reap in joy, Psal. cxxvi. 5. This death is also swallowed up in victory. They are now entirely and for ever freed from every clog, defect, and defilement. By beholding their Lord as he is, in all his glory and love, without any interposing veil or cloud, they are made like him, and to the utmost measure of their capacity conformed to his image. Now they are absolutely spotless and impeachable; for though mutability seems no less essential to a creature than dependence, yet they cannot change, because their Lord is unchangeable, for their life is hidden with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. They cannot fall from their holiness or happiness, because he has engaged to uphold and maintain them by his almighty power.

III. One branch of the death due to sin is the tyranny and power of Satan. For a time he ruled in their hearts, as in his own stronghold; and while they were blinded by his influence they were little affected with their bondage. Hard as his service was, they did not often complain of it. They were led by him according to his will for the most part without resistance, or, if they attempted to resist, they found it was in vain. But in his own hour their Lord, who had bought them, dispossessed their strong enemy, and claimed their hearts for himself. Yet after they were thus set free from his ruling power, this adversary was always plotting and fighting against them. How much have some of them suffered from his subtle wiles and his fiery darts! from his rage as a roaring lion, from his cunning as a serpent lying in their path, and from his attempts to deceive them under the semblance of an angel of light! 2 Cor. xi. 14. But now they are placed out of his reach Death and Satan are swallowed up. The victory is complete. The wicked one shall never have access to touch or disturb them any more. Now he is shut up in his own place, and the door sealed, no more to open. While he was permitted to vex and worry them, he acted under a limited commission which he could not exceed; all was directed and over-ruled by the wisdom and love of their Lord for their

advantage. Such exercises were necessary, then, to discover to them more of the weakness and vileness of their own hearts, to make them more sensible of their dependence upon their Saviour, and to afford them affecting proofs of his power and care engaged in their behalf. But they are necessary no longer. Their warfare is finished. They are now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, Job iii. 17.

IV. While they were in the world, they had a share, many of them a very large share, of the woes and sufferings incident to this mortal state: which, as they are the fruits and effects of sin, and greatly contribute to shorten the life of man, and hasten his return to dust, are, as I formerly observed, properly included in the comprehensive meaning of the original sentence, death. They belong to its train, and are harbingers of its approach. None of the race of Adam are exempted from these; but especially the servants of God have no exemption. Their gracious Lord, who frees them from condemnation, and gives them peace in himself, assures them that in this world they shall have tribulation, John xvi. 33. This is so inseparable from their calling, that it is mentioned as one special mark of their adoption and sonship, Heb. xii. 6—8. If the prosperity of the wicked sometimes continues for a season without interruption, their day is coming (Ps. xxxvii. 13); but the righteous may expect chastisement and discipline daily. Thus their graces are refined, strengthened, and displayed, to the praise of their heavenly Father. There is no promise in the Bible that secures the most eminent and exemplary believer from participating in the heaviest calamities in common with others, and they have many trials peculiar to themselves. Thus, while upon earth, they endure hardship for his sake. Because he chose them out of the world, and they would no longer comply with its sinful maxims and customs, the world hated them, John xv. 19. Many of them were the mark of public scorn and malice, accounted the offscouring of all things; they were driven to deserts, and mountains, and caves; they suffered stripes, imprisonment, and death. Others had trials of pains, sickness, and poverty, of sharp bereaving dispensations. Their gourds withered, and the desire of their eyes was taken away with a stroke. They had fightings without, and fears within. So that if their pressures and troubles were considered, without taking into the account their inward supports and the consolation they derived from their hopes beyond the grave, they might be deemed of all men the most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. But they were supported under these exercises, brought safely through them, and now their sorrows are swallowed up in victory. Now the days of their mourning are ended, Is. lx. 17. They now confess, that their longest afflictions were momentary, and their heaviest burdens were light, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. iv. 17) which they have entered upon. Sorrow and sighing have taken their everlasting flight, and joy and gladness have come forth to meet them, and to dwell with them for ever, Is. li. 11.

V. In their collective capacity, the seeds of sin often produced bitter fruits. Through remaining ignorance and prejudice, they often mistook and misunderstood one another. They lost much good which they might otherwise have enjoyed, and brought upon themselves many evils. Through their intemperate heats and unsanctified zeal, which divided them into little parties and separate interests, the children of the same family, the members of the same body, were too often at variance, or at least cold and distant in their regards to each other. Yea, Satan could foment discord and jealousies among those who lived in the same house, or met at the same table of the Lord. But now grace has triumphed over every evil; sin and death are swallowed up in victory. Now all is harmony love, and joy. They have one heart and one song, which will never more be blemished by the harshness of a single discordant note.

May this prospect animate our hopes, and awaken, in those who have hitherto been afar off, a desire of sharing in the happiness of the redeemed! Awful will be the contrast to those who have had their portion in this world! Is it needful to address any in this auditory, in the language which our Lord used to his impenitent hearers? "Wo unto you that are rich; for you have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full; for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep!" Luke vi. 24, 25. When the rich man, who had lived in honour and affluence here, was torn from all that he loved, and lifted up his eyes in torment, the remembrance of his former state, that he once had his good things (Luke xvi. 25), but that they were gone, for ever gone, could only be a keen aggravation of his misery. Dreadful will be the condition of all who die in their sins; but the case of those who are now frequently envied by the ignorant, in the view of a mind enlightened by the truth, must appear doubly and peculiarly pitiable. They have the most to lose, they have the most to account for. Alas, how terrible, how sudden the change! From a state of honour and influence amongst men, to fall in a moment under the contempt and displeasure of the holy God—to pass, from a crowd of dependents and flatterers, to the company of Satan and his angels; from grandeur and opulence, to a state of utter darkness and horror, where the worm dieth not, and the fire cannot be quenched, Mark. ix. 44, 46, 48. These are sensible images, it is true; the things of the unseen

world cannot be described to us as they are in themselves; but we may be certain that the description falls unspeakably short of the reality. The malicious insults of the powers of darkness, the mutual recriminations of those who, having been connected in sin here, will be some way connected in misery hereafter (Matth. xiii. 30),—remorse, rage, despair, a total and final exclusion from God the fountain of happiness, with an abiding sense of his indignation:—this complicated misery cannot be expressed in the language of mortals—like the joy of the blessed, it is more than eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Add the ideas of unchangeable and eternal to the rest, that it will be a misery admitting of no intermission, abatement, or end; and then seriously consider, what can it profit a man should he gain the whole world, if at last he should thus lose his soul? Matth. xvi. 26. No longer make a mock at sin: it is not a small evil; it is a great evil in itself, and, unless pardoned and forsaken, will be productive of tremendous consequences. No longer make light of the gospel: it points out to you the only possible method of escaping the damnation of hell. To refuse it, is to rush upon remediless destruction. No longer trust in uncertain riches: if you possess them, I need not tell you they do not make you happy at present, much less will they comfort you in the hour of death, or profit you in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Waste not your time and talents (which must be accounted for) in the pursuit of sensual pleasure; in the end it will bite like a serpent. For all these things God will assuredly bring you into judgment, unless in this day of grace you humble yourselves to implore that mercy which is still proposed to you, if you will seek it sincerely and with your whole heart; and which I once more entreat, charge, and adjure you to seek, by the great name of Messiah, the Saviour, by his agonies and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death, and by the consideration of his future glorious appearance, to subdue all things to himself.

SERMON XLIV.

TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 COR. xv. 55—57.

THE christian soldier may, with the greatest propriety, be said to war a good warfare, 1 Tim. i. 18. He is engaged in a good cause; he fights under the eye of the Captain of his salvation. Though he be weak in himself, and though his enemies are many and mighty, he may do that which in other soldiers would be presumption, and has often been the cause of a defeat; he may triumph while he is in the heat of battle, and assure himself of victory before the conflict is actually decided; for the Lord, his great Commander, fights for him, goes before him, and treads his enemies under his feet. Such a persuasion, when solidly grounded upon the promises and engagement of a faithful unchangeable God, is sufficient, it should seem, to make a coward bold. True christians are not cowards; yet, when they compare themselves with their adversaries, they see much reason for fear and suspicion on their own parts; but when they look to their Saviour, they are enlightened, strengthened, and comforted. They consider who he is, what he has done; that the battle is not so much theirs as his; that he is their strength and their shield, and that his honour is concerned in the event of the war. Thus out of weakness they are made strong; and however pressed and opposed, they can say, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us!" Rom. viii. 37. The whole power of the opposition against them is summed up in the words Sin and Death: but these enemies are already weakened and disarmed. It is sin that furnished death with his sting; a sting sharpened and strengthened by the law. But Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin, and has so fulfilled and satisfied the law on their behalf, that death is deprived of its sting, and can no longer hurt them. They may therefore meet it with confidence, and say, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have here two unspeakably different views to take of the same subject,—Death armed with its formidable sting; and Death rendered harmless, and its aspect softened, by the removal of the sting.

I. The first is a very awful subject: I entreat your attention. I am not now about to speak upon a point of speculation. It is a personal, a home concern to us all For we must all die. But should any of you feel not only the stroke, but the sting of death when you leave this world, it were better for you that you had never been born.

The love of life, and consequently a reluctance to that dissolution of the intimate union between soul and body, which we call death, seems natural to man. But, if there was no hereafter, no state of judgment and retribution to be expected; if there was no consciousness of guilt, no foreboding of consequences upon the mind; if we only considered death as inevitable, and had no apprehensions beyond it; death would be divested of

its principal terrors. We see that when conscience is stupified, or when the mind is poisoned with infidelity, many people, notwithstanding the natural love of life, are so disgusted with its disappointments, that a fit of impatience, or the dread of contempt, often prevails on them to rush upon death by an act of their own will; or to hazard it in a duel, rather than be suspected of wanting what they account spirit. But death has a sting, though they perceive it not till they feel it, till they are stung by it past recovery.

But usually, and where the heart is not quite hardened, men are unwilling and afraid to die. They have some apprehension of the sting. Death can sting at a distance. How often and how greatly does the fear of death poison and embitter all the comforts of life, even in the time of health! Perhaps some of you well know this to be true. But in health people can in some measure run away from themselves, if I may so speak. They fly to business, company, and amusements, to hide themselves from their own reflections. Their fears are transient, occasional and partial; they would tremble indeed, if they knew all; or if they were stedfastly and deliberately to contemplate what they do know. How sin is the sting of death, is best discovered when conscience is alarmed in a time of sickness; when the things of the world can no longer amuse, and death is approaching with hasty strides. These scenes are mostly kept secret; and very often they are not understood by those who are spectators of them. Perhaps the unhappy terrified sinner is considered as delirious, because the sting of death in his conscience extorts from him such confessions and complaints as he never made before. What was once slighted as a fable, is now seen and felt as a reality. Such cases, I am afraid, are more frequent than we are in general aware of. But they are suppressed, ascribed to the violence of the fever, and forgotten as soon as possible. Yet they do sometimes transpire. I believe there is no reason to doubt the truth of what we have heard, of one, who in the horrors of despair vainly offered his physicians many thousand pounds, to prolong his life but a single day. The relation is in print, of another, who pointing to the fire in his chamber, said, If he were only to lie twenty thousand years in such a fire, he should esteem it a mercy compared with what he felt, and with what he saw awaiting him. It is not always thus. Many persons die insensible as they lived, and can perhaps, trifle and jest in their last moments. But the scripture assures us, that when they who die in their sins breathe their last in this world, they open their eyes in the other world in torments. For the sting of death, the desert of sin, unless timely removed by faith in Jesus, will fill the soul with anguish for ever. It derives a strength, an efficacy, and a continuance from the law.

This law, which gives strength to sin and sharpens the sting of death, is the law of our creation, as connected with the penalty which God has annexed to the breach of it. Our relation to God, as we are his creatures, requires us, according to the very nature of things, supremely to love, serve, trust, and obey him, who made us, and in whom we live, and breathe, and have our being, Acts xvii. 28. And our revolting from him, and living to ourselves in opposition to his will, is such an affront to his wisdom, power, authority, and goodness, as must necessarily involve misery in the very idea of it, if his perfections, the capacity of our souls, and our absolute dependence upon him, be attended to. And they must be attended to sooner or later. Though he keep long silence, and the sinner presumes upon his patience, and thinks him such a one as himself, he will at length reprove him (Ps. l. 21), and set his sins in order before him, in contrast with the demands of his law. The nature, authority, extent, and sanction of this law, all combine to give efficacy to the sting of death.

1. The law, to which our tempers and conduct ought to be conformed, is not an arbitrary appointment; but necessarily results from our state as creatures, and the capacities and powers we have received from our Creator. It is therefore holy, wise, and good; indispensable, and unchangeable. To love God with all our heart and strength, to depend upon him, to conform to every intimation of his will, was the duty of man from the first moment of his existence; was the law of his nature, written originally in his heart. The republication of it, as it stands in the Bible, by precepts and prohibitions, would not have been necessary had he continued in that state of rectitude in which he was created. It became necessary after his fall, to restrain him from evil and to convince him of sin; but could not properly increase his primitive obligation to obedience.

2. We are bound to the observance of this law by the highest authority. It is the law of God our maker, preserver, and benefactor, who has every conceivable right to govern us. His eye is always upon us, and we are surrounded by his power, so that we can neither avoid his notice nor escape his hand. Men are usually tenacious of their authority; they seldom allow their dependants to dispute or disobey their commands with impunity. It is expected that a son should honour his father, and a servant his master, Mal. i. 6. And when men have power to execute the dictates of their pride, they frequently punish disobedience with death. But how will these haughty worms, who trample upon their fellow-worms, and think they have a right to the

most implicit obedience from their inferiors; now will they tremble when they shall appear before God, who is no respecter of persons, to answer for their contempt of the authority of the Sovereign Lawgiver, who, alone, is able to save or to destroy? That we ought to obey God rather than man (Acts v. 29), will, perhaps, be allowed as a speculative truth; but whoever will uniformly make it the rule of his practice, must expect upon many occasions to be deemed a fool or a madman by the world around him. But sovereignty, majesty, authority, and power belong to God. He is the Governor of the universe, and his throne is established in righteousness. He is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious, but he will not forego his right. Sin is the sting of death indeed, when the authority of him against whom it was committed is perceived by the conscience.

3. The extent of the law adds to the strength by which sin acts as the sting of death. Human laws can only take cognisance of words and actions. But the law of God reaches to the thoughts and inward recesses of the heart. It condemns what is most specious and most approved amongst men, if not proceeding from a right intention, and directed to the right end, which can be no other than the will and glory of him who made us. It condemns the sinner not only for the evil which he has actually committed, but for every sinful purpose formed in his heart, and which was only rendered abortive for want of opportunity, Matth. v. 28. It likewise takes exact notice of every aggravation of sin, arising from circumstances, from the abuse of superior light and advantages, and from the long train of consequences, increasing in proportion to the influence which the rank, wealth, or extensive connections of the offender give to his example.

4. The sanction of the law, which thus strengthens the malignity of sin, is the very point, if I may so express myself, of the sting of death. This is the displeasure of the Almighty. His holy, inflexible love of order will exclude those who violate it from his favour. They must be miserable, unless they are reconciled and renewed by the grace of the gospel. They must be separated from him, and they cannot be happy without him. They are not so even in this world, which they love. How miserable then must they be, when, torn from all their attachments, pleasures, and possessions, having no longer any thing to divert them from a fixed attention to their true state, they shall be made keenly sensible of what is implied in that sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." We cannot now conceive what it will be to lose the only good which can satisfy a soul. to be shut out from God, whose favour is life, and in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and to be shut up where neither peace nor hope can enter. The images of fire unquenchable and a never-dying worm, are but faint emblems of that despair and remorse which will sting the sinful soul in a future state. This is the second death: this is eternal death; for the wicked, and all they who forget God, when thrust into hell, will for ever desire to die, and death will for ever flee from them, Rev. ix. 6.

II. Let us turn our thoughts to a more pleasing theme, and attempt to take a view of death as softened into a privilege by him who has brought life and immortality to light. Jesus died. His death was penal; he died for sin, though not for his own, and therefore suffered the penalty due to sin, the curse of the broken law. The torment and shame of his crucifixion were preceded and accompanied by unknown agonies and conflicts, which caused him to sweat blood, and to utter strong cries and groans. Death stung him to the heart; but (as it is said of the enraged bee) he lost his sting. The law having been honoured, and sin expiated, by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God for us, and in our nature, death has no longer power to sting those who believe in him. They do not properly die, they fall asleep in Jesus, Acts vii. 60; 1 Thessalonians iv. 15. To them this last enemy acts a friendly part. He is sent to put an end to all their sorrows, and to introduce them into a state of endless life and joy.

1. Dying believers can sing this song before their departure out of the world. We expect it, when we are called to attend them in their last hours; and if their illness leaves them in possession of their faculties and speech, we are seldom disappointed. Yet I believe a full knowledge of this subject cannot be collected from what we observe of others, or hear from them, when they are near death. We must be in similar circumstances ourselves, before we can see as they see, or possess the ideas which they endeavour to describe, and which seem too great for the language of mortals to convey.

We know, by the evidence of undeniable testimony, that many faithful servants of God, when called to suffer for his sake, have not only been supported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice, under the severest tortures, and even in the midst of the flames. We suppose, I think with reason, that such communications of light and power as raise a person, in such situations, above the ordinary feelings of humanity, must, either in kind or degree, be superior to what is usually enjoyed by christians in the smoother walks of prosperity and outward peace. God, who is all-sufficient, and always near, has promised to give his people strength according to their day, and in the time of trouble they are not disappointed. A measure of the like extraordinary discoveries and supports is often vouchsafed to

dying believers, and thus the gloom which might otherwise hang over their dying hours, is dispelled; and while they contemplate the approach of death, a new world opens upon them. Even while they are yet upon earth, they stand upon the threshold of heaven. It seems, in many cases, as if the weakness of the bodily frame gave occasion to the awakening of some faculty, till then dormant in the soul, by which invisibles are not only believed, but seen, and unutterables are heard and understood.

> The soul's dark cottage, tattered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks.———

Instances are frequent of those who are thus blessed when they die in the Lord; and it does not appear that old age, or great knowledge, or long experience, gives any considerable advantage in a dying hour; for when the heart is truly humbled for sin, and the hope solidly fixed upon the Saviour, persons of weak capacities and small attainments, yea, novices, and children, are enabled to meet death with equal fortitude and triumph. And often the present comforts they feel, and their lively expectations of approaching glory, inspire them with a dignity of sentiment and expression far beyond what could be expected from them; and perhaps their deportment upon the whole is no less animating and encouraging, than that of the most established and best informed believers. Thus, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord ordains strength, and perfects his praise, Ps. viii. 2. In a few hours, under the influence of his immediate teaching, they often learn more of the certainty and importance of divine things than can be derived from the ordinary methods of instruction in the course of many years. In the midst of agonies and outward distress, we hear them with admiration declare that they are truly happy, and that they never knew pleasure in their happiest days of health equal to what they enjoy when flesh and heart are fainting. For death has lost its sting as to them, and while they are able to speak, they continue ascribing praise to him, who has given them the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Every word in this doxology is emphatical.

1st. Thanks be to God.—This blessedness is all his work. The means are of his gracious appointment. The application is by his gracious power. He gave his Son for them, he sent his gospel to them. It was the agency of his Spirit that made them a willing people. The word of promise, which is the ground of their hope, was of his gratuitous providing, and it was he who constrained and enabled them to trust in it, Ps. cxix. 49.

2d. Who giveth us the victory.—This is victory indeed; for it is over the last enemy; and after the last enemy is vanquished, there can be no more conflicts. In this sense, believers are more than conquerors. In other wars, they who have conquered once and again, may have been finally defeated, or they may have died (like our long-lamented general Wolfe) upon the field of battle, and have left the fruits of their victory to be enjoyed by others. But the christian soldier, though he may occasionally be a loser in a skirmish, he is sure to conquer in the last great deciding battle; and when to an eye of sense, he seems to fall, he is instantly translated to receive the plaudit of his Commander, and the crown of life which he has prepared for them that love him.

3d, This victory is through our Lord Jesus Christ.—They gained it not by their own sword, neither was it their own arm that saved them, Ps. xliv. 3. He died to deliver them, who would otherwise, through fear of death, have been always subject to bondage. And it is he who teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to fight, and covers their heads in the day of battle. Therefore they gladly say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory and the praise," Ps. cxv. 1. And this consideration enhances their pleasure; for because they love him above all, they rejoice not only in the victory they obtain, but in the thought that they are indebted to him for it. For were it possible there could be several methods of salvation, and they were left to their own choice, they would, most gladly and deliberately, chuse that method which should bring them under the greatest obligations to him.

2. This triumphant song will be sung to the highest advantage, when the whole body of the redeemed shall be collected together to sing it with one heart and voice at the great resurrection-day. Lot was undoubtedly thankful, when he was snatched from the impending destruction of Sodom. Yet his lingering (Gen. xix. 16) shewed, that he had but an imperfect sense of the greatness of the mercy afforded him. His feelings were probably stronger afterwards, when he stood in safety upon the mountain, and actually saw the smoke rising, like the smoke of a furnace, from the place where he had lately dwelt. At present we have but very faint ideas of the misery from which we are delivered, of the happiness reserved in heaven for us; or of the sufferings of the Redeemer; but if we attain to the heavenly Zion, and see from thence the smoke of that bottomless pit, which might justly have been our everlasting abode, we shall then more fully understand what we are delivered from, the means of our deliverance, and the riches of the inheritance of the saints in light. And then we shall sing in more exalted strains than we can at present even conceive of, "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XLV.

DIVINE SUPPORT AND PROTECTION.

(What shall we say then to these things?) If God be for us, who can be against us? Rom. viii 31.

THE passions of joy or grief, of admiration or gratitude, are moderate, when we are able to find words which fully describe their emotions. When they rise very high, language is too faint to express them; and the person is either lost in silence, or feels something which, after his most laboured efforts, is too big for utterance. We may often observe the apostle Paul under this difficulty, when attempting to excite in others such sensations as filled his own heart, while contemplating the glories and blessings of the gospel. Little verbal critics, who are not animated by his fervour, are incapable of entering into the spirit of his writings. They coldly examine them by the strictness of grammatical rules, and think themselves warranted to charge him with solecisms, and improprieties of speech. For it must be allowed, that he sometimes departs from the usual forms of expression; invents new words, or at least compounds words for his own use, and heaps one hyperbole upon another. But there is a beautiful energy in his manner far superior to the frigid exactness of grammarians, though the taste of a mere grammarian is unable to admire or relish it. When he is stating the advantage of being with Christ, as beyond any thing that can be enjoyed in the present life, he is not content with saying, as his expression is rendered in our version, "It is far better," Phil. i. 23. In the Greek, another word of comparison is added, which, if our language would bear the literal translation, would be, "Far more better," or "Much more better." And when he would describe the low opinion he had of himself, great as his attainments were in our view, he thinks it not sufficient to style himself "The least of all saints," but "less than the least," Eph. iii. 8. Such phrases do not imply that he was ignorant of the rules of good writing, but they strongly intimate the fulness of his heart. In the course of the chapter before us, having taken a rapid survey of the work of grace, carried on by successive steps in the hearts of believers, till at length consummated in glory, in this verse, instead of studying for words answerable to his views, he seems to come to a full stop, as sensible that the strongest expressions he could use would be too faint. He makes an abrupt transition from describing to admiring. He has said much, but not enough; and therefore sums up all with, "What shall we say to these things?" Surely they who can read, with the utmost coolness and difference, what he could not write without rapture and astonishment, do not take his words in his sense. If the apostle's phraseology is now become obsolete, and sounds uncouth in the ears of too many who would be thought christians, is there not too much reason to fear that they are christians only in name?

Though this short lively question is omitted in the musical composition, I am not willing to leave it out. It stands well, as a sequel to what we have lately considered. The sting of death is taken away. Death itself is swallowed up in victory. Sinners, who were once burdened with guilt and exposed to condemnation, obtain a right to sing, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ"—"What shall we say to these things?"

It stands well likewise, as introducing the following question,—"If God be for us;" if his promises, his power, his wisdom, and his love, be all engaged on our behalf, "who can be against us?" What shall we, or can we, or need we say more than this? what cause can we have for fear, or our enemies for triumph, if God be for us?

We may consider,

I. What is implied in the supposition.

II. The meaning of the inference.

I. The form of the question is hypothetical. If the assumption be right, that God is for us; the conclusion, that none can be effectually against us, is infallibly sure. Many serious persons will allow, that if God be indeed for them, all must, and will be well in the end. But they hesitate at the *if*, and are ready to ask, How shall I know that God is for me? I would offer you a few considerations towards the determining of this point, in the first place.

Sin has made an awful breach and separation between God and mankind. They are alienated in their minds from him, and he is justly displeased with them. The intercourse and communion with God, which constitute the honour and happiness of the human nature, were no longer either afforded or desired when man rebelled against his Maker, except to the few who understood and embraced his gracious purpose of reconciliation, the first intimation of which was revealed in the promise of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15. The clear and full discovery of this reconciliation is made known to us by the gospel. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. God is already reconciled in his sense, that having provided and accepted a satisfaction to his law and justice, he can now, in a way worthy of himself, receive and pardon the returning sinner. And he accompanies the word of his grace with the power of his Holy Spirit, to make sinners willing to be reconciled to him. If we be for God, he is assuredly for us. If we seek him, he has

been beforehand with us: for, in the first instance, he is always found of those who seek him not, Is. lxv. 1. If we love him, it is because he first loved us. True believers walk with God. But two cannot walk together, with confidence and comfort, unless they be agreed, Amos iii. 3. This agreement is chiefly with respect to three particulars proposed by the Lord God in his word, and to which the believing sinner cheerfully and thankfully accedes.

1. In the ground of the agreement; this is Messiah, the Mediator between God and man. When he entered upon his office, a voice from heaven commended him to sinners. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii. 17. And they who are enlightened to behold the glory of God in his person and engagement, accept him as the beloved Saviour in whom and with whom they are well pleased. Without this acceptance of the Mediator there can be no agreement. Jesus is the only door, the only way of a sinner's access to the knowledge and favour of God. This is the precious and sure foundation which he has laid in Zion (1 Pet. ii. 6); and to presume to build our hope upon any other, is to build upon a quicksand. In this point reason, in its present distempered state, would lead us, if followed, directly contrary to the simplicity of faith. Reason suggests, that if we have acted wrong we must repent and amend, and what can we do more? But the law against which we have sinned makes no provision for repentance. Nor is such a repentance as includes a change of heart (and nothing short of this deserves the name) in our own power. Repentance unto life (Acts xi. 18) is the gift of God; and Jesus, who is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour (Acts v. 31), bestows it upon those who acknowledge him, and implore it of him. But God will only treat with us as those who are condemned already, who have nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but misery. When we feel this to be our proper state, we are referred to Jesus, in whom God is well pleased, and for whose sake sins are pardoned, and sinners accepted and justified, without condition and without exception. And then likewise we begin to see the necessity, propriety, and sufficiency of this appointment. Herein all who are taught of God are of one mind. However they may differ in some respects, they agree in cordially receiving Christ Jesus the Lord (Col. ii. 6), as he is made of God for us wisdom, righteousness, and salvation.

2. They agree with God in the great design of the gospel, which is to purify unto himself a peculiar people, who, being delivered from their fears and their enemies, shall serve him with an unreserved and persevering obedience, Luke i. 74, 75. A deliverance from the power of sin and Satan, a devotedness to God, and a conformity to the mind and pattern of his dear Son, are included by every true believer in the idea of salvation. He knows that he can be happy in no other way. This is a turning point. There are convictions of sin excited by a dread of punishment, which, though distressing to the conscience, leave the heart and affections unchanged. They who are thus impressed, if no farther, would be satisfied with an assurance of pardon. But the grace of God which bringeth salvation (Tit. ii. 11, 12), teaches us to renounce, to abhor all ungodliness in the present world; to give ourselves unto him who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and to walk worthy of God, who calls us to his kingdom and glory, 1 Thess. ii. 12. This is the will of God, even our sanctification. And this is the desire of his people, that they may be sanctified wholly; that their whole persons, spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless; that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ; that they may walk as the sons of God without rebuke, and shine as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. Though their attainments are imperfect, in their judgment and desires, they are fully agreed with God as to their aim and design.

3. They are agreed with him likewise as to the ultimate great end, the final cause of their redemption, which is the praise of the glory of his grace, Eph. i. 6. That the loftiness, high looks, and proud pretences of men may be abased, and the Lord alone may be exalted, and that he who glorieth may glory only in the Lord, 1 Corinthians, i. 31. Salvation is of the Lord in every sense; the plan, the price, the power, the application, the consummation. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the object of it. The praise therefore is wholly due to him, and he claims it. To this claim his people fully consent. It is the desire of their souls, that his name, which alone is excellent, may alone be extolled; and with one heart and voice they say, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thee be all the glory and all the praise, Psal. cxv. 1.

If we truly understand and approve these things, then we are certainly engaged for God, and of course he is for us. For he alone could either enable us to see them in their true light, or incline our hearts to embrace them. Who then can be against us?

II. We are not to understand the question, "Who can be against us?" as designed to encourage us to expect that they who have the Lord on their side will meet with no opposition, but that all opposition against them will be in vain.

1. They whom God is for, will on that very account have many opposers.

(1.) The men of the world.—This our Lord expressly teaches us to expect. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," John xv. 19. And his apostle, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," 1 John iii. 14. Till we declare for him, the world will bear with us, but no longer, as the Gibeonites were in a state of honour and friendship with the neighbouring cities till they submitted to Joshua (Josh. x. 1—4); but when they obtained peace from him, they were immediately involved in war with their former friends. While Saul persecuted the church, the world smiled upon him, and he seemed to be, as we say, in the way of preferment. But when he yielded himself to the service of Christ, and his defection from the common cause became generally known, bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place; and they who before had employed and caressed him sought his life. I do not mean to sound a trumpet of defiance. I believe that young converts, by their warm but injudicious zeal, often, more than is necessary, provoke the spirit of the world, and thereby increase their own difficulties. The gospel, when rightly understood, inspires a spirit of benevolence, and directs to a conduct which is suited to conciliate good-will and esteem. And when the apostle exhorts us, If it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men (Rom. xii. 18), he gives us hope that much may be done to soften prejudices, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to make them at least ashamed, by a patient perseverance in well-doing. A consistent christian, whose integrity, humility, and philanthropy mark his character and adorn his profession, will in time command respect; but his attachment to unfashionable truths, and his separation from the maxims and pursuits of the many, will render him, in their eyes, singular and precise, weak and enthusiastic. If they say, "He is a good sort of man, but has some strange peculiarities," it is the most favourable judgment he can hope for; and from some persons, and at some times, he will meet with tokens of a settled dislike. For though a religious character may be formed, which even the world will approve, yet all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, 2 Tim. iii. 12. They walk in the midst of observers, who watch for their halting, who lay snares for their feet, and will endeavour to bribe or intimidate them to forsake the path of duty. It is difficult to stem the torrent, or to avoid the infection of the world, and to live superior to the fear of man, as becomes us, if we know whose we are, and whom we serve. But though difficult, it is practicable and attainable, and actually attained by believers; for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, 1 John v. 4.

(2.) The powers of darkness.—Satan will not ordinarily trouble while he bears rule. He is indeed an enemy to his own servants, and seeks their destruction, both soul and body, by pushing them on in sin, which if persisted in will prove their ruin; but while they make no resistance, he gives them no disturbance. It is otherwise with those whom the Lord has freed from his bondage. He will pursue them like a lion seeking his prey (1 Pet. v. 8), and lie in wait for them like a serpent in the path. This is one cause of the world's hatred; for the scripture styles him the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4), and he sets all that he can influence, tongues, and pens, and swords, against those who are on the Lord's side. Therefore the people of God may be known by two marks. Satan by himself and by his instruments fights against them, and they also fight against him. The former without the latter is not conclusive. A mere outward profession of religion may excite opposition, and mere pretenders may take pleasure in it for a time, if it does not come too close. It may feed their vanity, and give them a sort of consequence, by having sufferings to talk of. But I would entreat my hearers seriously to examine, Is your heart really set against sin, which is the strength of Satan's kingdom? Are you against his will and interest in the world? Have you renounced his service? If so, fear not. God is for you, and none can harm you. For,

2. No opposition can prevail against us, if God be for us. It is impossible to deny, or even to doubt this truth, upon the principles of reason; for who, or what, can injure those who are under the protection of Omnipotence? And yet it is not always easy to maintain the persuasion of it in the mind, and to abide in the exercise of faith, when, to an eye of sense, all things seem against us. But though we believe not, he continueth faithful, and will not forsake those whom he once enables to put their trust in him. Job was a faithful and approved servant of God, yet for a season his trials were great, and his confidence was sometimes shaken. But he was supported, and at length delivered. There are many instances recorded in scripture to confirm our faith, and to teach us, that God manifests himself to be for his people, and in different ways renders them superior to all their difficulties and enemies.

At one time he prevents the threatened danger. They only see it or expect it, for he is better to them than their apprehensions and fears. Thus, when Sennacherib was furious against Jerusalem, and supposed he could easily prevail, he was not suffered to come near it, Isa. xxxvii. 29, 33. When he thought to destroy it, he felt a hook and a bridle which he could not resist, and was compelled to retire disappointed and ashamed.

At another time the enemies go a step farther. His people are brought into trouble, but God is with them, and they escape un-

hurt. So Daniel, though he was cast into the den of lions (Dan. vi. 23), received no more harm from them than if he had been among a flock of sheep. He permitted three of his servants to be thrown into a furnace of fire, but he restrained the violence of the flames, so that not even a hair of their heads was singed, Dan. iii. 27.

The most that opposers can do is to kill the body, Luke xii. 4. If God permits his people to be thus treated, still they are not forsaken. Their death is precious in his sight, Psal. cxvi. 15. They who die in the Lord are blessed. They are highly honoured who are called and enabled to die for him. If he is pleased to comfort them with his presence, and then to take them home to himself, they can desire no more. Stephen, though apparently given up to the power of his adversaries, and cruelly stoned to death, was no less happy than those who die in composure upon their beds, with their friends around them. Nor was he less composed; for the heavens were opened to him, and he saw his Saviour in glory, approving his fidelity, and ready to receive his spirit, Acts vii. 56—60.

In brief, whatever men or devils may attempt against us, there are three things which, if we are true believers, they cannot do. They may be helpful to wean us from the world; they may add earnestness to our prayers; they may press us to greater watchfulness and dependence; they may afford fair occasions of evidencing our sincerity, the goodness of our cause, and the power of that God who is for us.—Such are the benefits that the Lord teaches his people to derive from their sufferings, for he will not let them suffer or be oppressed in vain. But no enemy can deprive us of the love with which God favours us, or the grace which he has given us, or the glory which he has prepared for us. Now what shall we say to these things?

Alas! there are too many who say, at least in their hearts (for their conduct bewrays their secret thoughts), we care but little about them. If they were to speak out, they might adopt the language of the rebellious Jews to the prophet, "As to the words which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth," Jer. xliv. 16, 17. And there are others who plainly say, Let us then continue in sin that grace may abound. They do not so expressly reject the gospel as to take encouragement from it to go on in their wickedness. The case of the former is very dangerous, that of the latter is still worse. But grace, though long slighted, though often abused, is once more proclaimed in your hearing. The Lord forbid that you should perish with the sound of salvation in your ears.

At present, and while you persist in your impenitence and unbelief, I may reverse the words of my text. O consider, I beseech you, before it be too late, if God be against you, who can be for you? Will your companions comfort you in a dying hour? Will your riches profit you in the day of wrath? Will the recollection of your sinful pleasures give you confidence to stand before this great and glorious Lord God, when you shall be summoned to appear at his tribunal? May you be timely wise, and flee for refuge to the hope set before you!

SERMON XLVI.

ACCUSERS CHALLENGED.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. ROM. viii. 33.

THOUGH the collating of manuscripts and various readings, has undoubtedly been of use in rectifying some mistakes which, through the inadvertency of transcribers, had crept into different copies of the New Testament; yet such supposed corrections of the text ought to be admitted with caution, and not unless supported by strong reasons and good authorities. The whole scripture is given by inspiration of God; and they who thankfully receive it as his book, will not trifle with it by substituting bold conjectural alterations, which, though they may deem to be amendments, may possibly disguise or alter the genuine sense of the passage. Some fancied emendations might be pointed out, suggested by very learned men, which do not seem to afford so strong a proof of the sound judgment of the proposers, as of their vanity and rashness. Let the learned be as ingenious as they please in correcting and amending the text of Horace or Virgil, for it is of little importance to us whether their criticisms be well founded or not, but let them treat the pages of divine revelation with reverence.

But the pointing of the New Testament, though it has a considerable influence upon the sense, is of inferior authority. It is a human invention, very helpful, and for the most part, I suppose, well executed. But in some places it may admit of real amendment. The most ancient manuscripts are without points, and some of them are even without a distinction of the words. With the pointing, therefore, we may take more liberty than with the text; though even this liberty should be used soberly. A change in the pointing of this verse and the following, will not alter the received sense, but, as some critics judge, will make it more striking and emphatical. I two clauses should be read with an interrogation instead of a period, the apostle's triun-

phant challenge may be expressed in the following brief paraphrase.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall God himself? So far from it, it is he *who justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ?* Nay, he loves them, and accepts them. *Shall he who died for them, yea, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God,* on their behalf, *who also maketh intercession for them?* There is not the least ground to fear, that he who has promised to justify them will lay any thing to their charge; or that he will condemn them, who died to deliver them from condemnation, nor can any charge of their enemies prevail to the condemnation of those whom God is pleased to justify, and for whom Christ died, and now intercedes before the throne.

The death, the resurrection, and ascension of Messiah, we have already considered. I shall speak only to two points from this verse.

I. The title here given to believers,—God's elect.

II. Their great privilege, they are justified,—It is God who justifieth them.

I. The persons who will be finally justified by God are here styled his elect. Very near and strong is the connection between peace and truth. Yet a mistaken zeal for truth has produced many controversies, which have hurt the peace of the people of God among themselves; and at the same time have exposed them to the scorn and derision of the world. On the other hand, a pretended or improper regard for peace has often been prejudicial to the truth. But that peace which is procured at the expense of truth, is too dearly purchased. Every branch of doctrine, belonging to the faith once delivered to the saints, is not equally plain to every believer. Some of these doctrines the apostle compares to milk, the proper and necessary food for babes (Heb. v. 13, 14); others to strong meat, adapted to a more advanced state in the spiritual life, when experience is more enlarged, and the judgment more established. The Lord, the great teacher, leads his children on gradually, from the plainer to the more difficult truths, as they are able to bear them. But human teachers are often too hasty: they do not attend sufficiently to the weakness of young converts, but expect them to learn and receive every thing at once; they are not even content with offering strong meat prematurely to babes, but force upon them the bones of subtilties, distinctions, and disputations. But though a judicious minister will endeavour to accommodate himself to the state of his hearers, no gospel-truth is to be tamely and voluntarily suppressed from a fear of displeasing men. In fact, however, the controversies which have obtained among real christians, have not so much affected the truth as it lies in scripture, as the different explanations, which fallible men of warm passions, and too full of their own sense, have given of it. They who professedly hold and avow the doctrine of an election of grace, are now called *Calvinists;* and the name is used by some persons as a term of reproach. They would insinuate that Calvin invented the doctrine; or at least, that he borrowed it from Austin, who, according to them, was the first of the Fathers that held it. It is enough for me that I find it in the New Testament. But many things advanced upon the subject by later writers, I confess, I do not find there If any persons advance harsh assertions not warranted by the word of God, I am not bound to defend them. But as the doctrine itself is plainly taught, both by our Lord and his apostles, and is of great importance, when rightly understood, to promote the humiliation, gratitude, and comfort of believers, I think it my duty to state it as plainly as I can. I shall offer my view of it, in a series of propositions so evidently founded (as I conceive) on acknowledged principles of scripture, that they cannot be easily controverted by any persons who have a real reverence for the word of God, and any due acquaintance with their own hearts.

1. All mankind are sinners (Rom. iii. 23) by nature and practice. Their lives are stained with transgressions, their hearts are depraved, their minds blinded, and alienated from God. So that they are not sensible either of their guilt or their misery; nor so much as desirous of returning to God, till he prevents them with his mercy, and begins to draw their hearts towards himself. Were I to prove this at large, I might transcribe one half of the Bible. Nay, it is fully proved by experience and observation. The Heathens felt and confessed it. My present subject does not require me to account for it, or to reason upon it. That it is so, I appeal to fact.

2. The inestimable gift of a Saviour, to atone for sin and to mediate between God and man (John iii. 16); that there might be a way opened for the communication of mercy to sinners, without prejudice to the honour of the perfections and government of God—this gift was the effect of his own rich grace and love (Rom. v. 6, 8), no less unthought of, and undesired, than undeserved by fallen man.

3. Wherever this love of God to man is made known by the gospel, there is encouragement, and a command given to all men everywhere to repent, Acts xvii. 30, 31. The manifestation of the eternal Word in the human nature, and his death upon the cross, are spoken of as the highest display of the wisdom and goodness of God. Designed to give us, in one and the same transaction, the most affecting sense of the evil of sin, and the strongest assurance imaginable, that there is forgiveness with God, Rom. iii. 24, 25.

4. Men, while blinded by pride and prejudice, enslaved to sinful passions, and under

the influence of this present evil world, neither can nor will receive the truth in the love of it, 2 Cor. iv. 4; John v. 40; vi. 44. They are prepossessed and pre-engaged. This, at least, is evidently the case with many people in this favoured nation, who, when the gospel is proposed to them in the most unexceptionable manner, not only disregard, but treat it with a pointed contempt and indignation, Luke iv. 28, 29; Acts xvii. 18. Such was its reception at the beginning, and we are not to wonder, therefore, that it is so at this day.

5. As all mankind spring from one stock, there are not two different sorts of men by nature; consequently they who receive the gospel are no better in themselves (Eph. ii. 3), than they are who reject it. The apostle writing to the believers at Corinth, having enumerated a catalogue, in which he comprises some of the most flagitious and infamous characters (1 Cor. vi. 9—11), and allowed to be so by the common consent of mankind, adds, "such were some of you." Surely it cannot be said, that they who had degraded themselves below the brutes, by their abominable practices, were better disposed than others to receive that gospel, which is not more distinguished by the sublimity of its doctrine, than by the purity and holiness of conversation which it enjoins!

6. It seems, therefore, at least highly probable, that all men universally, if left to themselves, would act as the majority do to whom the word of salvation is sent; that is, they would reject and despise it. And it is undeniable, that some, who in the day of God's power have cordially received the gospel, did for a season oppose it with no less pertinacity than any of those who have continued to hate and resist it to the end of life. Saul of Tarsus was an eminent instance, Acts ix. 1. He did not merely slight the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; but, according to his mistaken views, thought himself bound in conscience to suppress those who embraced it. He breathed out threatening, and slaughter, and, as he expresses it himself was exceedingly mad against them (Acts xxvi. 11), and made havoc of them. His mind was filled with this bitter and insatiable rage, at the moment when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in his way to Damascus. Is it possible that a man thus disposed should suddenly become a preacher of the faith which he had long laboured to destroy, if his heart and views had not been changed by a supernatural agency? Or that the like prejudices in other persons can be removed in any other manner?

7. If all men had heard the gospel in vain, then Christ would have died in vain. But this is prevented by the covenanted office and influence of the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 8), who accompanies the word with his energy and makes it the power of God to the salvation of those who believe. He prepares the minds of sinners, and, as in the case of Lydia (Acts xvi. 14), opens their hearts to understand and receive the truth, in the love of it.

8. But who will presume to say, that when God was pleased to make a proposal of mercy to a race of rebels, he was likewise bound to overcome the obstinacy of men in every case, and to compel them to accept it by an act of his invincible power. If he does thus interpose in favour of some, it is an act of free mercy to which they have no claim. For if we had a claim, the benefit would be an act of justice, rather than of mercy. May not the great Sovereign of the world do what he will with his own? Matth. xx. 15. And nothing is more peculiarly and eminently his own than his mercy. Yes, we are assured, that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy (Rom. ix. 18); and whom he will, he may justly leave to be hardened in their impenitence and unbelief. We have all deserved to be so left; but he, as the potter over the clay, has power and right to make a difference, as it seemeth good in his sight. And who will say unto him, What doest thou? Job ix. 12.

9. When sinners are effectually called by the gospel, then they are visibly chosen out of the world (John xv. 19), in the spirit and tempers of which they before lived, disobedient and deceived, even as others. Old things pass away, and all things become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. Their hopes and fears, their companions and pleasures, their pursuits and aims, are all changed. The change in these respects is so evident, that they are soon noticed and marked, pitied or derided, by those from whom they are now separated. And I think they who really experience this change will willingly ascribe it to the grace of God.

10. But if they are thus chosen in time, it follows of course that they were chosen from everlasting. Both these expressions, when applied to this subject, amount to the same thing; and the seeming difference between them is chiefly owing to our weakness and ignorance. To the infinite and eternal God our little distinctions of past, present, and future, are nothing. We think unworthily of the unchangeable Jehovah, and liken him too much to ourselves, if we suppose that he can form a new purpose. If it be his pleasure to convert a sinner to-day, he had the same gracious design in favour of that sinner yesterday, at the day of his birth, a thousand years before he was born, and a thousand ages (to speak according to our poor conceptions) before the world began. For that mode of duration which we call time, has no respect to him who inhabiteth eternity, Is. lvii. 15.

With regard to those who reject the declaration of the mercy of God, who though called and invited by the gospel, and often touched by the power of his Holy Spirit, will not come

to the Saviour for life, but persist in their determination to go on in their sins, their ruin is not only unavoidable, but just in the highest degree. And though, like the wicked servant in the parable (Matth. xxv. 24), they cavil against the Lord, their mouths will be stopped (Rom. iii. 19), when he shall at length appear to plead with them face to face. Then their cobweb excuses will fail them, and the proper ground of their condemnation will be, that when he sent them light, they turned from it, and chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil, John iii. 19.

II. The great privilege of the elect, comprehensive of every blessing is, that they are justified, finally and authoritatively justified from all that can possibly be laid to their charge; for it is God himself who justifieth them.

The justification of a sinner before God, by faith in the obedience and atonement of Christ, is considered by many persons, in these days of refinement, in no better light than as a branch of scholastic theology, which is now exploded as uncouth and obsolete. At the Reformation, it was the turning point between the Protestants and Papists. Luther deemed it the criterion of a flourishing or a falling church; that is, he judged the church would always be in a thriving or a declining state, in proportion as the importance of this doctrine was attended to. How important it appeared to our English reformers, many of whom sealed their testimony to it with their blood, may be known by the writings of Cranmer, Latimer, Philpot, and others; and by the Articles of the Church of England, which are still of so much authority by law, that no person can be admitted into Holy Orders amongst us, till he has declared and subscribed his assent to them. But I hope never to preach a doctrine to my hearers which needs the names and authority of men, however respectable, for its support. Search the scriptures (John v. 39), and judge by them of the importance of this doctrine. Judge of it by the text now before us. The apostle speaks of it as sufficient to silence every charge, to free from all condemnation, and inseparably connected with eternal life; for those whom God justifies he will also glorify, Rom. viii. 30. Though volumes have been written upon the subject, I think it may be explained in few words. Every one must give an account of himself to God; and the judgment will proceed according to the tenor of his holy word. By the law no flesh can be justified, for all have sinned (Rom. iii. 19, 20): but they who believe the gospel will be justified from all things (Acts xiii. 39), for which the law would otherwise condemn them; and as they who believe not are condemned already (John iii. 18), so believers are already justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 1), in the present life. They plead guilty to the charge of the law; but they can likewise plead, that they renounce all hope and righteousness in themselves, and upon the warrant of the word of promise, put their whole trust in Jesus, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. x. 4): and this plea is accepted. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5), and his sins are no more remembered against him, Heb. viii. 12.

This justification, in its own nature, is authoritative, complete, and final. It is an act of God's mercy, which, because founded upon the mediation of Jesus, may, with no less truth, be styled an act of his justice, whereby the believing sinner is delivered from the curse of the law, from the guilt and power of sin, and is translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, Col. i. 13. It includes the pardon of all sin, and admission to the state of a child of God. It is a passing from death unto life, John v. 24. By faith of the operation of God, the sinner, once afar off, is brought nigh, is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes one with him, as the branch is united to the vine, and the members with the head, John xv. 15. The sanctification of a believer is imperfect, and gradual; but his justification, in this sense, from the moment when he begins to live a life of faith in the Son of God, is perfect, and incapable of increase. The principle of life in a new-born infant, and the privileges dependent upon his birth (if he be the heir of a great family), are the same from the first hour, as at any future time. He is stronger as he grows up to the stature of a man, but is not more alive; he grows up likewise more into the knowledge and enjoyment of his privileges, but his right to them admits of no augmentation; for he derives it, not from his years, or his stature, or his powers, but from the relation in which he stands as a child to his father. Thus it is with those who are born from above; they are immediately the children and heirs of God, though for a time, like minors while under age, they may seem to differ but little from servants (Gal. iv. 1, 2); and it doth not yet appear what they shall be.

But though justification in the sight of God be connected with the reality of faith, the comfortable perception of it in our own consciences is proportionable to the degree of faith. In young converts, therefore, it is usually weak. They are well satisfied that Jesus is the only Saviour, and they have no doubt of his ability and sufficiency in that character, in favour of those who put their trust in him; but they are suspicious and jealous of themselves; they are apprehensive of something singular in their own case, which may justly exclude them from his mercy, or they fear that they do not believe aright. But the weakest be-

liever is a child of God; and true faith, though at first like a grain of mustard-seed, is interested in all the promises of the gospel. If it be true, it will grow (Mark iv. 26), it will attain to a more simple dependence upon its great object, and will work its way, through a thousand doubts and fears (which, for a season, are not without their use), till at length the weak christian becomes strong in faith, strong in the Lord, and is enabled to say, "I know whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. 12. Who shall lay any thing to my charge? Who shall condemn? It is God who justifieth. It is Christ who died for me and rose again.

But especially at the great day, the Lord the Judge shall ratify their justification publicly before assembled worlds. Then every tongue that riseth in judgment against them (Is. liv. 17), shall be put to silence. Then Satan will be utterly confounded, and many who despised them on earth will be astonished, and say—"These are they whose lives we accounted madness, and their end to be without honour. How are they numbered among the children of God!" Wisdom, v. 4, 5.

The right knowledge of this doctrine is a source of abiding joy; it likewise animates love, zeal, gratitude, and all the noblest powers of the soul, and produces a habit of cheerful and successful obedience to the whole will of God. But it may be, and too often is, misunderstood and abused. If you receive it by divine teaching, it will fill you with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God, Phil. i. 11. But if you learn it only from men and books, if you are content with the notion of it in your head, instead of the powerful experience of it in your heart, it will have a contrary effect. Such a lifeless form, even of the truth itself, will probably make you heady and high-minded, censorious of others, trifling in your spirit, and unsettled in your conduct. Oh! be afraid of resembling the foolish virgins (Matth. xxv. 1—12), of having the lamp of your profession expire in darkness for want of the oil of grace; lest, when the bridegroom cometh, you should find the door shut against you.

SERMON XLVII.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. ROMANS, viii. 34.

THE redemption of the soul is precious. Fools make a mock of sin, Prov. xvi. 9. But they will not think lightly of it who duly consider the majesty, authority, and goodness of him against whom it is committed: and who are taught by what God actually has done, what sin rendered necessary to be done, before a sinner could have a well-grounded hope of forgiveness. For wisdom does nothing in vain. The death of the Son of God would have been in vain (Gal. ii. 21), if the great design in favour of sinful men could have been effected by inferior means. But as he, in the office of Mediator, was the hope of mankind from the beginning; so the great work he has accomplished, and the characters he sustains, when made known to the conscience, are, in fact, sufficient to relieve in every case, to answer every charge, and to satisfy the believer in Jesus that there is now no condemnation to fear. There are many (as we have observed) ready to accuse, but it is in vain; the charge may be true, but it is overruled. Who shall dare to condemn, if things be as the apostle states them in this passage? Whoever would impeach the hope of a true believer, must prove (if he can), that Christ did not die; or that he did not rise from the dead; or that he was not admitted into the presence of God on our behalf; or that he is unmindful of his promise, to make intercession for all who come unto God by him. For if these points are indubitable and sure, it is impossible that the soul which has trusted in Jesus, and put its cause into his hands, can miscarry.

The death and resurrection of our Lord, his appearance in our nature, clothed with glory, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the High-Priest of our profession, can scarcely be considered too often. These old truths are always new to those who love him, and are the food by which their souls live. Yet I shall not at present repeat what I have offered upon them from former passages, but shall chiefly confine myself to the subject of his intercession, which has not, until now, expressly occurred to our meditations.

The word the apostle uses here, and in Heb. vii. 25,—"Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession," occurs likewise in Acts xxv. 24, where Festus speaks of the process managed by the Jews against Paul; and also, so in Rom. xi. 2, of Elijah's making intercession to God against Israel. From these passages compared together, we may observe that the word is to be taken in a large sense. He pleads our cause, he manages our concerns, he answers our enemies. Who then shall condemn those for whom the Lord Jesus thus employs his power and his love? He is our advocate (1 John ii. 1), he takes upon him our whole concern. He pleads as a Priest, and manages as a King, for those who come unto God by him.

I. He pleads as a Priest.—His office of intercession has a plain reference to his great instituted type, the high priest under the Le-

vitical dispensation; who, according to the appointment of God, entered within the vail, to present the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. We have a clear and infallible explanation of the design of this institution. "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 6—12. Thus Jesus is passed into the heavens, entered into the holy of holies with his own blood. His presence there, in our nature, with the marks of his sufferings for us, as the Lamb that has been slain, is an unceasing virtual intercession on our behalf. I meddle not with curious questions on this subject, as to the manner in which his intercession is carried on: It is sufficient to know that he is there and there for us, as our representative. This consideration is of continual use, to animate and encourage sinners in their approach to God. There are three cases particularly, in which the heart that knows its own bitterness must sink, were it not for the relieving thought, that there is an advocate with the Father, a High Priest, who, by his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost.

1. When the mind is burdened with guilt. Great is the distress of an awakened conscience. The sinner now is sensible of wants which God alone can supply, and of miseries from which he cannot be extricated but by an almighty arm. But when he thinks of the majesty and holiness of God, he is troubled and adopts the language of the prophet, "Wo is me, I am undone!" Isa. vi. 5. He dares not draw near to God, nor does he dare to keep any longer at a distance from him. But when such a one is enabled to look to Jesus as the intercessor, what light and comfort does he receive? For the gospel speaks inviting language. Let not the weary and heavy-laden sinner fear to approach. Your peace is already made in the court above, and your advocate is waiting to introduce you. Lift up your heart to him, and think you hear him in effect saying, "Father, there is another sinner who has heard of my name, and desires to trust in me. Father, I will, that he also may be delivered from going down into the pit, and interested in the ransom which I have provided."

2. When we are deeply conscious of our defects in duty. If we compare our best performances with the demands of the law, the majesty of God, and the unspeakable obligations we are under; if we consider our innumerable sins of omission, and that the little we can do is polluted and defiled by the mixture of evil thoughts, and the working of selfish principles, aims, and motives, which though we disapprove, we are unable to suppress, we have great reason to confess, "To us belong shame and confusion of face," Dan. ix. 7. But we are relieved by the thought, that Jesus, the High Priest, bears the iniquity of our holy things, perfumes our prayers with the incense of his mediation, and washes our tears in his own blood. This inspires a confidence, that though we are unworthy of the least of his mercies, we may humbly hope for a share in the greatest blessings he bestows, because we are heard and accepted, not on the account of our own prayers and services, but in the beloved Son of God, who maketh intercession for us. Thus the wisdom and love of God have provided a wonderful expedient, which, so far as it is rightly understood, and cordially embraced, while it lays the sinner low as the dust in point of humiliation and self-abasement, fills him at the same time with a hope full of glory, which, with respect to its foundation, cannot be shaken; and with respect to its object, can be satisfied with nothing less than all the fulness of God. There are favoured seasons in which the believer, having a lively impression of the authority and love of the Intercessor can address the great Jehovah as his Father, with no less confidence than if he was holy and spotless as the angels before the throne, at the very moment that he has abundant cause to say, "Behold I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" Job xl. 4; xlii. 6.

3. This powerful and prevalent intercession abundantly compensates for the poverty and narrowness of our prayers. Experience confirms what the scripture declares of our insufficiency to order our own cause before the Lord, to specify our various wants, and to fill our mouths with such arguments, as may engage the attention, and enliven the affections of our hearts. "We know not how to pray as we ought," Rom. viii. 26. And though the Holy Spirit teaches believers to form petitions, which, in the main, are agreeable to the will of God, yet we often mistake and ask amiss; we often forget what we ought to ask, and we are too often cold, negligent, weary, distracted, and formal in prayer. How prone are we to enter by prayer into the Lord's pre-

sence, as the thoughtless horse rushes into the battle! (Jer. viii. 6.) to speak to God as if we were only speaking into the air, and to have our thoughts dissipated and wandering to the ends of the earth, while his holy name is upon our polluted lips! It is well for us, that God is both able and gracious to do more than we can ask or think; but that he actually does so, for such unworthy creatures, is owing to our Intercessor. He knows all our wants, and pleads and provides accordingly. He is not negligent, though we too frequently are. He prayed for Peter's safety (Luke xxii. 31, 32), before Peter himself was aware of his danger. Have we not sometimes been as it were surprised and shamed by the Lord's goodness, when he has condescended to bestow special and needful mercies upon us, before we thought of asking for them? These are affecting proofs of our Intercessor's attention and care, and that he is always mindful of us. But,

II. Jesus the High Priest is upon a throne.—He is a King, King of saints, and King of nations. He is not only a righteous advocate, but he possesses all authority and power. And it belongs to his office as King, effectually to manage for those in whose behalf he intercedes. I have already observed that the original word includes this sense.

1 He is the source and fountain of their supplies. All their springs are in him. The fulness of wisdom, grace, and consolation, out of which they are invited to receive, resides in him. And therefore he says, "If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 14. Not merely, I will present your petitions, but I will fulfill them myself. For all things are committed into his hands, and it is he with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13. He therefore enjoins us, if we believe or trust in God, to believe also in him, John xiv. 1. His invitations, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37);—"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17); equally express his sovereignty and his munificence. On him the eyes of all who know him wait from age to age, and are not disappointed. He opens his hand, and satisfies them with good, Psal. cxlv. 17. Nor is the store of his bounty diminished by all that he has distributed, for it is unsearchable and inexhaustible, like the light of the sun, which gladdens the eyes of millions at once, has done so from the beginning, and will continue to do so to the end of time.

2. He appoints and adjusts their various dispensations, with an unerring suitableness to their several states, capacities, and circumstances. If a skilful gardener had the command of the weather, he would not treat all his plants, nor the same plant at all times, exactly alike. Continual rain, or continual sunshine, would be equally unfavourable to their growth and fruitfulness. In his kingdom of providence, he so proportions the rain and the sunshine to each other, that the corn is usually brought forward from the seed to the blade, the ear, and the full ripe ear. And I believe it would be always so, were it not for the prevalence of sin, which sometimes makes the heavens over our head brass, the earth under our feet iron (Deut. xxviii. 23), and turns a fruitful land into barrenness. So, in his kingdom of grace, he trains his people up by various exercises. He delights in their prosperity, and does not willingly grieve them. But afflictions in their present state are necessary, and his blessing makes them salutary. But this is their great privilege, that their comforts and their crosses are equally from his hand, are equally tokens of his love, and alike directed to work together for their good. He appoints the bounds of their habitations, numbers the hairs of their heads, and is their guide and guard, their sun and shield, even unto death. Here they meet with many changes, but none that are unnoticed by him, none that can separate them from his love, and they all concur in leading them on to a state of unchangeable and endless joy, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. He is the Captain of their salvation, Heb. ii. 10. They are his soldiers, and fight under his eye; yet the battle is not theirs but his. Israel of old were to muster their forces, to range themselves for the fight, to use every precaution and endeavour, as though success depended entirely upon themselves. Yet they obtained not the victory by their own sword, but it was the Lord who fought for them, and trod down their enemies before them; and they had little more to do than to pursue the vanquished, and to divide the spoil. And thus it is in the warfare which true christians maintain, not against flesh and blood only, bu against principalities and powers (Eph. vi. 12), against the spirit of the world, and against Satan and his legions. They fight in his cause, but he upholds them and conquers for them. Their enemies are too many and too mighty for them to grapple with in their own strength; but he rebukes them, and pleads the cause of his people. His gracious interposition in their favour is beautifully set forth, together with its effects, in the vision which the prophet saw, when he was sent to encourage the rulers and people of the Jews against the difficulties they met with when rebuilding the temple. He saw Joshua the high priest, who, in that character, represented the collective body of the people, standing before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him, Zech. iii. 1—4. Such is our attire as sinners, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and such are the attempts of our enemy, to deter us from approaching to him who alone can relieve us, or to distress us when we appear before him. But when Joshua could not speak for himself, the Lord spake for him

claimed him for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, silenced his adversary, clothed him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head. Thus David acknowledged the Lord's goodness in providing him a table in the midst of his enemies (Psal. xxiii. 5), who saw with envy his privileges, but were not able to prevent his enjoyment of them. Many a time the Lord thus comforts and feeds his people, while waiting on him in secret, or attending his public ordinances; and were our eyes opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to behold what is very near, though unseen, we should feel the force of the psalmist's observation. The powers of darkness surround us, their malice against us is heightened by the favour of our good Shepherd toward us; they rage, but in vain; for though they could presently deprive us of peace, and fill us with anguish, if we were left exposed to their assaults, they are under a restraint, and can do nothing without his permission. When he is pleased to give quietness, who then can make trouble? Job xxxiv. 29. He preserves and provides for his sheep in the midst of wolves.

We may close this part of our subject with two or three reflections, which, though as to the substance of them I may have offered you before, are always seasonable and suitable, when we are speaking of the power and grace of Messiah.

1. How precious is this Saviour! How justly is he entitled to the chief place in the hearts of those who know him! In the work of salvation, from the first step to the last, he is all in all. If he had not died and risen again, we must have died for ever. If he had not ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, we must have been thrust down into the lowest hell. If he did not plead for us, we would not, we durst not offer a word in our own behalf. If he was not on our part, engaged to keep us night and day, our enemies would soon be too hard for us. May we therefore give him the glory due to his name, and cleave to him, and trust in him alone.

2. How safe are the people of whom he undertakes the care! While his eye is upon them, his ear open to their prayer, and his arm of power stretched out for their protection; while he remembers that word of promise upon which he himself has caused them to hope; while he retains that faithfulness which encouraged them to commit their souls to him, it is impossible that any weapon or stratagem formed against them can prevail. There are many, it is true, who will rise up against them; but God is for them, and with them, a very present help in trouble, Ps. xlvi. 1. They are full of wants and fears, and in themselves liable to many charges; but since Jesus is their head, their security, their intercessor, no needful good shall be with-held from them, no charge admitted against them, none shall condemn them, for it is God himself who justifies the believer in Jesus.

3. If these things be so, how much are they to be pitied, who hear of them without being affected or influenced by them? Will you always be content with hearing? "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" Ps. xxxiv. 8. Should you at last be separated from those with whom you now join in public worship; should you see them admitted into the kingdom of God, and you yourselves be thrust out; your present advantages would then prove an aggravation of your guilt and misery. As yet, there is room. Strive to enter while the gate of mercy remains open. Think of the solemnities of that great day. Many will then be condemned, though they who believe in the Son of God will be justified. Consider who will condemn them, God himself, Ps l. 6. From his inquisition there can be no retreat; from his sentence there can be no appeal. And consider what the condemnation will be: a final exclusion from his favour; a never-ceasing sense of his awful displeasure; a state of eternal horror and despair, without mitigation, without the smallest ray of hope! Can you deliberately give up all claim to happiness, and determine to rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler (Job xv. 26), to defy his power, and to dare his threatenings, rather than forego the transitory and delusive pleasures of sin? And can you do this with the gospel sounding in your ears? May the Lord prevent it! However, observe you are once more warned, once more invited. If now at last, after so many delays, so much perverseness on your part, you will honestly and earnestly seek him, he will be found of you. But if you persist in your obstinacy, your condemnation will be inevitable and sure.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

—Thou—hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood (out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation). Rev. v. 9.

The extent, variety, and order of the creation, proclaim the glory of God. He is likewise *maximus in minimis*. The smallest of his works that we are capable of examining, such for instance as the eye or the wing of a little insect, the creature of a day, are stamped with an inimitable impression of his wisdom and power. Thus in his written word there is a greatness, considering it as a whole, and a beauty and accuracy in the smaller parts, analogous to what we observe in the visible creation, and answerable to what an enlightened and humble mind may expect in a book which

bears the character of a divine revelation. A single verse, a single clause, when viewed (if I may so speak) in the microscope of close meditation, is often found to contain a fulness, a world of wonders. And though a connected and comprehensive acquaintance with the whole scripture be desirable and useful, and is no less the privilege than the duty of those who have capacity and time at their own disposal to acquire it; yet there is a gracious accommodation to the weakness of some persons, and the circumstances of others. So that in many parts of scripture, whatever is immediately necessary to confirm our faith, to animate or regulate our practice, is condensed into a small compass, and comprised in a few verses; yea, sometimes a single sentence, when unfolded and examined, will be found to contain all the great principles of duty and comfort. Such is the sentence which I have now read to you. In the Messiah it is inserted in the grand chorus taken from the 12th and 13th verses of this chapter. And as it may lead us to a compendious recapitulation of the whole subject, and by the Lord's blessing, may prepare us to join in the following ascription of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; I propose to consider it in its proper connection, as a part of the leading song of the redeemed before the throne, in which the angels cannot share, though from their love to redeemed sinners, and from their views of the manifold wisdom and glory of God in visiting such sinners with such a salvation, they cheerfully take a part in the general chorus.

The redemption spoken of, is suited to the various cases of sinners of every nation, people, and language. And many sinners of divers descriptions, and from distant situations, scattered abroad into all lands, through a long succession of ages, will, by the efficacy of this redemption, be gathered together into one, John xi. 52. They will constitute one family, united in one great Head, Eph. iii. 14, 15. When they shall fully attain the end of their hope, and encircle the throne, day without night, rejoicing, their remembrance of what they once were, their sense of the happiness they are raised to, and of the great consideration to which they owe their deliverance and their exaltation, will excite a perpetual joyful acknowledgment to this purport. They were once lost, but could contribute nothing to their own recovery. Therefore they ascribe all the glory to their Saviour. They strike their golden harps, and sing in strains, loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blest voices, "Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

But though this song, and this joy, will only be consummated in heaven, the commencement takes place upon earth. Believers, during their present state of warfare, are taught to sing it; in feebler strains indeed, but the subject of their joy, and the object of their praise, are the same which inspire the harps and songs in the world of light. May I not say, that this life is the time of their rehearsal? They are now learning their song, and advancing in meetness to join in the chorus on high, which, as death successively removes them, is continually increasing by the accession of fresh voices. All that they know, or desire to know, all that they possess or hope for, is included in this ascription.

I take the last clause of the verse into the subject. The words suggest three principal points to our consideration:

I. The benefit,—Redemption to God.

II. The redemption price,—By thy blood.

III. The extent of the benefit,—To a people out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.

I. Thou hast redeemed us to God.—Redemption or ransom is applicable to a state of imprisonment for debt, and to a state of bondage or slavery. From these ideas taken together, we may form some estimate of the misery of our fallen state; a theme, which, if I cannot insist upon at large in every discourse, I would never wholly omit. For we can neither understand the grace, nor enjoy the comfort of the gospel, but in proportion as we have a heart-felt and abiding conviction of our wretched condition as sinners without it. They who think themselves whole know not their need of a physician (Matth. ix. 12), but to the sick he is welcome.

If a man, shut up in prison for a heavy debt, which he is utterly incapable of discharging, should obtain his liberty, in consideration of payment made for him by another, he might be properly said to be redeemed from imprisonment. This supposition will apply to our subject. The law and justice of God have demands upon us which we cannot answer. We are therefore shut up, under the law, in unbelief, helpless, and hopeless, till we know and can plead the engagement of a surety for us. For a time, like Peter, we are sleeping in our prison (Acts xii. 6—10), regardless of danger. The first sensible effect of the grace of God, is to awaken us from this insensibility. Then we begin to feel the horrors of our dungeon, and the strength of our chains, and to tremble under the apprehension of an impending doom. But grace proceeds to reveal the Saviour and friend of sinners, and to encourage our application to him. In a good hour the chains fall off, the bars of iron and brass are broken asunder, and the prison-doors fly open. The prisoner understands that all his great debt is forgiven, blesses his deliverer, obtains his liberty, and departs in peace.

We are likewise in bondage the servants, the slaves of a harder taskmaster than Pha-

roah was to Israel. Satan, though not by right, yet by a righteous permission, tyrannizes over us, till Jesus makes us free, John viii. 34, 36. The way of transgressors is hard, Prov. xiii. 15. Though the solicitations and commands of that enemy who worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2), are in some respects suited to our depraved inclinations, yet the consequences are grievous. A burdened conscience, a wasted constitution, a ruined fortune and character, swiftly and closely follow the habits of intemperance and lewdness; and they who seem to walk in a smoother path, are deceived, mortified, and disappointed daily. If persons who live openly and habitually in a course that is contrary to the rule of God's word, speak swelling words of vanity (2 Pet. ii. 18, 19), and boast of their liberty, believe them not. We are sure they carry that in their bosom which hourly contradicts their assertions. Yea, sometimes their slavery is so galling, that they attempt to escape, but in vain. They are soon retaken, and their bonds made stronger. The issue of their short-lived reformations, which they defer as long as possible, and at last set about with reluctance, usually is, that their latter end proves worse than their beginning. At most, they only exchange one sinful habit for another, sensuality for avarice, or prodigality for pride. The strong one armed will maintain his dominion, till the stronger than he interposes and says, Loose him, and let him go, for I have found a ransom. Then, by virtue of the redemption-price, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is delivered, Is. xlix. 24, 25. Then the enslaved sinner, like the man, out of whom the legion was cast, sits at the feet of Jesus, in peace, and in his right mind, Mark v. 15. He becomes the Lord's freed-man.

For he is not only delivered from guilt and thrall, he is redeemed to God. He is now restored to his original state, as an obedient and dependent creature, devoted to his Creator, conformed to his will and image, and admitted to communion with him in love. These are blessings which alone can satisfy the soul, and without which it is impossible for man to be happy. While he is ignorant of his proper good, and seeks it in creatures, he is and must be wretched. Madness is in his heart, a deceived, disordered imagination turns him aside, and he feeds upon ashes, and upon the wind, Is. xlv. 20. But by grace he is renewed to a sound judgment, his mind receives a right direction, and he is turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, Acts xvi. 18.

II. What unspeakably, and beyond conception enhances the value of this deliverance, is the consideration of the means by which it is effected. For it is not merely a deliverance, but a redemption. It is not an act of mere mercy, but of mercy harmonizing with justice. It is not an act of power only, but of unexampled and expensive love.—"Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood!"

The sentence denounced by the law against transgressors, was death. And therefore when Messiah became our surety, to satisfy the law for us, he must die. The expression of *his blood*, is often used figuratively for his death, perhaps to remind us how he died. His was a bloody death. When he was in his agony in Gethsemane, his sweat was as great drops of blood, falling down to the ground, Luke xxii. 44. His blood flowed when he gave his back to the smiters, under the painful strokes of the scourging he endured previous to his crucifixion. It flowed from his head, when the soldiers, having mocked his character of King by crowning him with thorns, by their rude blows forced the thorns into his temples. His blood streamed from the wounds made by the spikes, which pierced his hands and his feet, when they fastened him to the cross. When he hung upon the cross, his body was full of wounds, and covered with blood. And, after his death, another large wound was made in his side, from which issued blood and water. Such was the redemption-price he paid for sinners, his blood, the blood of his heart. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. Nor could any blood answer the great design, but his. Not any, not all the bloody sacrifices appointed by the law of Moses could take away sin, as it respects the conscience, nor afford a plea, with which a sinner could venture to come before the most high God, Micah vi. 6. But the blood of Messiah, in whom were united the perfections of the divine nature and the real properties of humanity, and which the apostle therefore styles the blood of God (Acts xx. 28), this precious blood cleanses from all sin. It is exhibited as a propitiation of perpetual efficacy, by which God declares his righteousness, no less than his mercy, in forgiving iniquities (Rom. iii. 25, 26), and shews himself just to the demands of his holiness, and the honour of his government, when he accepts and justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus.

If these things were understood and attended to, would it be thought wonderful that this Saviour is very precious to those who believe in him, and who obtain redemption by his blood? How can it possibly be otherwise? Grace like this, when known, must captivate and fix the heart! Not only to save, but to die, and to die for his enemies! Such costly love, productive of such glorious consequences, and to such unworthy creatures! Surely the apostle's mind was filled and fired with these considerations, when authenticating an epistle with his own hand, he subjoined this emphatical close, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha!" 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Do you think

my brethren, that the apostle took pleasure in denouncing so severe a sentence against all those who did not see (as we say) with his eyes? Had he so little affection for sinners, that he could thus consign them to destruction by multitudes, for differing from him in what some persons only deem an opinion? Rather consider him, not as breathing out his own wishes, but as speaking in the name and on the behalf of God. He knew it must be, and he declared it would be so. It was no pleasure to him to see them determined to perish. On the contrary, he had great grief and sorrow of heart for them, even for the Jews, who had treated him with the greatest cruelty. Even for their sakes, he could have been content to be made an anathema himself (Rom. ix. 3), that they might be saved. But upon the whole, he acquiesced in the will of God, and acknowledged it to be just, right, and equal, that if any man would not love the Lord Jesus Christ, after all that he had done and suffered for sinners, he should be accursed. By this comparison of the apostle's severe language with his compassionate temper, I am led to digress a little farther. It suggests an apology for ministers of the gospel in general. When we declare the terrors of the Lord, when we assure you that there is but one solid foundation for hope, and that, unless you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you must perish, some of our hearers account us bigotted, uncharitable, and bitter. But if you could see what passes in secret, how faithful ministers mourn over those who reject their message, how their disobedience cuts them to the heart, and abates the comfort they would otherwise find in your service; if you could believe us when we say (I trust truly) that we are ready to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also, because you are dear to us (1 Thes. ii. 8), and we long for your salvation; then you would think more favourably of us. But after all we cannot, we dare not, soften our message to please men. What we find in the word of God, we must declare. It would be at the peril of our souls, to speak smooth things, to prophesy deceits (Is. xxx. 10) to you; and, so far as we preach the truth, it will be at the peril of your souls, if we are disregarded.

III. The benefits of this redemption extend to a numerous people, who are said to be redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, and nation. I have, upon a former occasion,[1] offered you my sentiments concerning the extent of the virtue of that blood which taketh away the sin of the world. But the clause now before us invites me to make a few additional observations upon a subject which, I conceive, it much concerns us rightly to understand.

The redeemed of the Lord are those who actually experience the power of his redemption, who are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and brought into a state of liberty, peace, and holiness. That the people of every kindred, nation, and tongue, are not redeemed in this sense universally, is as certain as evidence of facts, and express declarations of scripture, can make it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Multitudes, thus disqualified, will be found trembling, on the left hand of the Judge, at the great day. But a remnant will be saved, according to the election of grace. For they who differ, who are redeemed to the service of God, while others live and die in the love and service of sin, do not make themselves to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7. It becomes the potsherds of the earth to ascribe to their Maker the glory of his sovereignty, and to acknowledge, that, if they have a good hope, it is because it pleased the Lord to make them his people who were once not his people, Hos. ii. 23. Yet a way of conceiving of the doctrines of the divine sovereignty, and of a personal election unto life, has often obtained, which seems to have a tendency to render the mind narrow, selfish, and partial, and to straiten the exercise of that philanthropy which the genius and spirit of the gospel powerfully inculcate. The best of us, perhaps, are more prone than we are aware of to assimilate the great God to ourselves, and to frame our ideas of him too much according to our own image. So that often much of a man's natural disposition may be observed in the views he forms of the divine perfections and conduct; as, on the other hand, his conceptions of the character of God strengthen and confirm him in his own tempers and habits. There are persons, who being persuaded in their own minds (we would hope upon sure grounds) that they themselves are of the elect, appear to be little concerned what may become of others. Their notions of God's sovereignty, and his right to do what he will with his own, though often insufficient to preserve them from repining and impatience under the common events of human life, raise them above all doubts and difficulties on a subject which the apostle speaks of as unsearchable and untraceable; where he acknowledges depths which he was unable to fathom (Rom. xi. 33), all appears to them quite plain and easy; where he admires and adores, they arrogantly dispute, and determine *ex cathedra*, and harshly censure all who are not so eagle-sighted as themselves. Methinks they who know the worth of a soul, from its vast capacity for happiness and misery, and its immortal duration, cannot justly be blamed for allowing no limits to their benevolent wishes for the salvation of mankind, but the will of God, as it is plainly made known to us in his word. To this we are to submit, not as of necessity only, but cheerfully, assured that his will is wise, holy, and good; that the Judge of all the world will do right; and to wait for the

[1] Sermon xvi.

day when he will condescend to clear up every difficulty, and give us that satisfaction which, in our present state of ignorance and weakness, we are incapable of receiving. Shall mortal man be more just, or can he be more merciful, than God? It is a false compassion, founded in a blameable disregard of what is due to the glory of his great name, that prompts us to form a wish that his unerringly wise appointments could be otherwise than they are. Yet it is a comfort to think that his mercy, in which he delights, in which he is peculiarly said to be rich, and which is higher than the heavens, will, in its exercise, far exceed the bounds which some fallible mortals would peremptorily assign to it. We must not indulge conjecture and hypothesis farther than the scripture will warrant; but while we humbly depend upon this infallible light, we need not be afraid to follow it, though it should, in some particulars, lead us a little beyond the outlines of some long received, and in the main very valuable human systems of divinity.

I have repeatedly expressed my belief, that many prophecies respecting the spread and glory of the kingdom of Messiah upon earth have not yet received their full accomplishment, and that a time is coming when many (perhaps the greater part of mankind) of all nations, and people, and languages, shall know the joyful sound of the gospel, and walk in the light of the Redeemer's countenance. At present, I would confine myself to consider what ground the scripture affords us to hope that there are many of every nation, people, and tongue, even now, singing this song before his throne.

The revelations vouchsafed to the beloved disciple in Patmos exhibit a succession of great events, extending (I suppose) from the apostles days to the end of time. But while only the learned can so much as attempt to ascertain from history the dates and facts to which the prophecies already fulfilled refer, or to offer probable conjectures concerning the events as yet future (in which the most judicious commentators are far from being agreed), there are passages interspersed which seem designed to administer consolation to plain believers, by representations suited to raise their thoughts to the state of the church triumphant. Though they are unable to explain the particulars of what they read, there is a glory resulting from the whole, which animates their hope and awakens their joy. Of this kind I think is that vision (Rev. vii. 9, *ad finem*), in which the apostle saw the servants of God, who were sealed in their foreheads, in number a hundred and forty-four thousand; and besides these a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," &c. I confess myself unable to expound this sublime passage, and to give the full or even the principal sense of it with certainty. But that it has some reference to what is now passing within the vail, which hides the unseen world from our view I cannot doubt. I propose my thoughts upon it with caution and diffidence. I dare not speak with that certainty which I feel myself warranted to use, when I set before you from scripture the great truths which are essential to a life of faith in the Son of God; yet I hope to advance nothing that is contrary to scripture, or to any deductions fairly and justly drawn from it.

Having premised this acknowledgment of my incompetence to decide positively, I venture to say, that by the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed in their foreheads (a definite for an indefinite number, which is frequent in scripture-language), I understand those, who, living to mature age, and where the gospel is afforded, are enabled to make a public and visible profession of religion, and are marked as it were in their foreheads, and know to whom they belong, by their open and habitual separation from the spirit and customs of the world which lieth in wickedness. And the exceeding great multitude, contradistinguished from these, I conceive to be those who are elsewhere styled the Lord's hidden ones: and that these are a great multitude indeed, gathered by him, who knows them that are his, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. I may distribute them into the following classes.

1. Infants.—I think it at least highly probable, that when our Lord says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Math. xix. 14), he does not only intimate the necessity of our becoming like little children in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants, who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate number of adult believers, that, comparatively speaking, his kingdom may be said to consist of little children. The apostle speaks of them as not having "sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. v. 14), that is, with the consent of their understanding and will. And when he says, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," he adds, "that every man may give an account of what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. But children who die in their infancy have not done any thing in the body, either good or bad. It is true, they are by nature evil, and must, if saved, be the subjects of a supernatural change. And though we cannot conceive how this change is to be wrought

yet I suppose few are so rash as to imagine it impossible that any infants can be saved. The same power that produces this change in some, can produce it in all; and therefore I am willing to believe, till the scripture forbids me, that infants, of all nations and kindreds, without exception, who die before they are capable of sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who have done nothing in the body of which they can give an account, are included in the election of grace. They are born for a better world than this; they just enter this state of tribulation; they quickly pass through it; their robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and they are admitted, for his sake, before the throne. Should I be asked to draw the line, to assign the age at which children begin to be accountable for actual sin, it would give me no pain to confess my ignorance.—The Lord knoweth.

2. A people hidden among the most degenerate communities, civil or ecclesiastical, that bear the name of Christian; where ignorance and superstition, or errors, which, though more refined, are no less contrary to the gospel, have a prevailing dominion and influence. What can be more deplorable, in the view of an enlightened and benevolent mind, than the general state of the Roman and Greek churches! where the traditions, inventions, and doctrines of men, a train of pompous and burdensome ceremonies, a dependence upon masses, penance, and pilgrimages, upon legends and fictitious saints, form the principal features of the public religion. Many nations are involved in this gross darkness, but they are not wholly destitute of the scripture; some portions of it are interwoven with their authorized forms of worship; and we cannot with reason doubt but a succession of individuals among them have been acquainted with the life and power of true godliness, notwithstanding the disadvantages and prejudices of their education. There are likewise amongst Protestants schemes of doctrine, supported by learning and by numbers, which are not more conformable to the standard of the New Testament than the grossest errors of Popery; and yet here and there persons may be met with, who, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to understand the scriptures, are made wiser than their teachers; and who, though still fettered by some mistakes and prejudices, give evidence in the main, that their hopes are fixed upon the only atonement, that they are redeemed to God, and are partakers of that faith which worketh by love, purifies the heart, and overcometh the world.

3. I will go one step farther. The inferences that have been made by some persons from the apostle Peter's words, that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts x. 34, 35), are, undoubtedly, rash and unscriptural. They would conclude from thence, that it is of little importance what people believe, provided they are sincere in their way; that the idolatrous Heathens, even the most savage of them, whose devotion is cruelty, who pollute their worship with human blood, and live in the practice of vices disgraceful to humanity, are in a very safe state, because they act, as it is supposed, according to their light. "But if the light which is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Such a lax candour as this tends to make the gospel unnecessary; if they who have it not are therefore excusable, though they neither love nor fear God, and live in open violation of the law of their nature. The declaration, that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14), holds universally, and without a single exception. But if we suppose a Heathen, destitute of the means of grace, by which conversion is usually wrought, to be brought to a sense of his misery, of the emptiness and vanity of worldly things, to a conviction that he cannot be happy without the favour of the great Lord of the world, to a feeling of guilt, and a desire of mercy; and that though he has no explicit knowledge of a Saviour, he directs the cry of his heart to the unknown Supreme to this purport, "*Ens entium, miserere mei*, Father and source of beings, have mercy upon me!"—who will prove that such views and desires can arise in the heart of a sinner, without the energy of that Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow? Who will take upon him to say, that his blood has not sufficient efficacy to redeem to God a sinner who is thus disposed, though he has never heard of his name? Or who has a warrant to affirm, that the supposition I have made is, in the nature of things, impossible to be realized? But I stop—I do not often amuse you with conjecture. And though for want of express warrant from scripture, I dare not give the sentiments I have now offered a stronger name than probable, or conjectural, I hope I do not propose them for your amusement. They will prove to your advantage and my own, if they are helpful to guard us against a narrow, harsh, and dogmatical spirit; and if, without abating our reverend submission to the revealed will of God, they have a tendency to confirm our views of his goodness, and the power and compassion of the great Redeemer.

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SERMON XLIX.

THE CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing / REV. v. 12.

IT was a good report which the queen of Sheba heard, in her own land, of the wisdom and glory of Solomon. It lessened her attachment to home, and prompted her to undertake a long journey to visit this greater king, of whom she had heard so much. She went, and she was not disappointed. Great as the expectations were which she had formed from the relation made her by others, they fell short of what she saw and heard herself, when she was admitted into his presence. Good, likewise, is the report of the gospel. It has a powerful effect upon those who receive it by faith. It is abundantly sufficient to convince them of the comparative insignificance of all that they most admired and esteemed in this world. From that hour they become strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They set out, in the way which God has prescribed, in hopes of seeing him who is greater than Solomon; and the report they have heard of him is their subject, their song, and their joy, while they are on their journey, and their great support, under the difficulties they meet with on the road. What then will it be to see him as he is? As yet, the one half is not told them. Or at least they are not yet capable of conceiving the half, or the thousandth part, of what they read in the scripture, concerning his wisdom, his glory, and his grace. We weaken, rather than enlarge, the sense of such a passage as this, by our feeble comments. We must die before we can understand it. To the bulk of mankind, "Wait the great teacher death," is cold, is dangerous advice. If they are not taught by the gospel while they live, the teaching of death will be too late. Dreadful will be the condition of those who cannot be convinced of their mistakes, till repentance and amendment will be impracticable. But death will be a great teacher, indeed, to a believer; he will then know more by a glance, and in a moment, of the happiness he is now expecting, than by all he could collect from the inquiry and experience of a long course of years, in this world.

The scenery of this chapter, if attentively considered, is sufficient to snatch our thoughts from the little concernments of time, and to give us some anticipation of the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Come, all ye that are wearied and burdened with afflictions and temptations, look up, and for a while, at least, forget your sorrows! The Lamb is upon his throne, surrounded by a multitude of his redeemed people, who once were afflicted and burdened like yourselves; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes. They have a song peculiarly their own, and are represented as taking the first and leading part in worship and praise. The angels cannot sing their song, they were not redeemed to God by his blood; but they are interested in the subject. Their highest views of the manifold wisdom of God are derived from the wonders of redemption. Therefore they join in the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." If you have a humble hope of bearing a part in this immortal song, will you hang down your heads like a bulrush, because you have the honour of following your Lord through many tribulations to his kingdom?

The number of the angels is expressed indefinitely, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; myriads, and millions; to intimate to us, that, with respect to our capacities and conceptions, they are innumerable. Their number is known to him who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names (Ps. cxlvii. 4), and to him only. The scripture intimates a diversity of ranks and orders among them, Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; but as to particulars, there is little said that might gratify our curiosity. It is enough for us to know, that the highest of them, and that all of them, worship him who is clothed in our nature. My text expressly informs us, that the object of their worship is the Lamb that was slain. Not that the humanity of Christ, which is but a creature, is simply and formally, the object of their worship; but they worship him who has assumed the human nature into personal union with himself; God manifest in the flesh, God in Christ. Though the world censure or despise us for honouring the Son as we honour the Father (John v. 23), we have here a good precedent, as we have in many places of scripture, the warrant of an express command. Whether men are pleased or not, we will, we must, worship the Lamb that was slain. To animate our devotion, let us thankfully consider, Why he was slain, and How he was slain.

I. Why he was slain.—The redeemed say, For us. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. They were sinners and enemies; they were slaves to sin and Satan; yet he loved them, and died to redeem them. It is by virtue of his blood and death that they are now before the throne. Nothing less than his death could have made them duly sensible of their misery, nothing less could have relieved them from it. He was lifted up upon the cross, that by the powerful magnetism of his dying love, he might, in the hour of his grace, draw their hearts to

nimself, John xii. 32. This was the design, this was the effect of his sufferings. A crucified Saviour, though a stumbling-block to the self-righteous, and foolishness to vain reasoners, was to them the power and the wisdom of God for salvation. They looked unto him, and were enlightened; they trusted in him, and were not ashamed. By faith in his name, they obtained peace with God, they renounced the ways of sin, they warred the good warfare, they overcame the world, and were at length made more than conquerors. For his sake they endured the cross, and despised the shame. They met with bad treatment from the world, but it was from the world that crucified him. While they were here their characters were obscured by their own imperfections, and by the misrepresentations and reproaches of their enemies. But now their reproach is removed, and they shine, each one like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, Matth. xiii. 43. What an immense constellation of suns! This their full salvation was the joy set before him, for the sake of which he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And now they see him as he is, they ascribe all their victories and honours to him, and unite in one song of endless praise to the Lamb that was slain.

II. Their praises are heightened, when they consider, How he was slain. He did not die a natural death. He was slain. Nor did he fall like a hero, by an honourable wound in the field of battle. The impression which the death of the late General Wolfe made upon the public, is not yet quite forgotten. He conquered for us, but it cost him his life. But he died honourably, and was lamented by his country. Not so the Lamb of God. He died the death of a slave, of a malefactor. Cruelty, malice, and contempt, combined to give his sufferings every possible aggravation. And after he was slain, very few laid it to heart. The world went on as it did before, as though nothing extraordinary had happened. But on this dark ground the perfections of God were displayed in their fullest lustre; and they are the perfections of the great Redeemer, and therefore distinctly ascribed to him by the angels in the words which follow—"Power, and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Though each of these words have a distinct sense, a nicety in defining them, and stating their precise meaning is of less importance than to feel the combined efficacy of them all, to impress our hearts with sentiments of reverence, confidence and love. The fulness of expression may teach us, that every kind of excellence is the indubitable right and possession of the Lamb that was slain. He is worthy to have them all attributed to him in the most absolute sense, and consequently worthy of our adoration, dependence, and praise.

1 Power.—It is spoken once, yea twice we have heard the same, that power belongeth unto God, Ps. lxii. 11. It belongeth to him eminently and exclusively. All the power of creatures is derived from him. Such is the power of the Lamb. He styles himself ὁ Παντοκράτωρ, the Omnipotent, the Upholder and Possessor of all things, Rev. i. 8, 11. He exerciseth this power in the human nature, Matth. xxviii. 18. He doeth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth (Dan. iv. 35); and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? He has, therefore, all sufficiency, and uncontroulable authority, for the discharge of his office, as the Mediator and head of his church. The divine perfections, being infinite, are not distinct in themselves, though the scripture, in condescension to our weakness, authorizes us to speak of them as distinguishable. God is one. And the power which can preserve and govern the world, involves in the idea of it every other excellence, which are separately mentioned in this passage.

2. Wisdom.—He is the only wise God, and our Saviour, Jude 25. His knowledge is perfect, his plan is perfect. In himself he is essentially the wisdom of God (Prov. viii. 22), and he is our wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is life eternal to know the only true God (John xvii. 3), and therefore it is life eternal to know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. For he is the only way, and the only door to this knowledge; no one can come unto God, or attain to any just conceptions of him, but in and by the Son of his love, who so perfectly represents God to us, is so completely the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, that whoso hath seen him, hath seen the Father, John xiv. 9. By him is opened to us the unsearchable wisdom of the divine counsels, particularly in the great work of redemption. "No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him," John i. 18; John xv. 15. It is by wisdom communicated from him, that his people are made wise unto salvation. Though there are few scholars and philosophers among them, and many of them are despised for their ignorance and weakness, yet in truth they have all a good understanding, for they know the Lord and his will; they know wherein their proper happiness consists, and how it is to be obtained. They are instructed how to walk and to please God, how to bear afflictions with patience, and to meet death with composure. This wisdom is far superior to that of the schools. But he bestows and maintains it. The eyes of their mind are opened, and they see by his light; but they have no light of their own, or in themselves. They wait upon him for direction in every difficulty, for the solution of every hard question which perplexes their spirits; and he makes the crooked

straight, teaches them to avoid the snares that are laid for them, or extricates them when entangled. Therefore in time, and to eternity, they will admire and adore his wisdom.

3. Riches.—All the stores of mercy, grace, and comfort, are in him, as light in the sun, or water in the ocean. The apostle, speaking of the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. iii. 8), gives us the idea of a mine, the height, length, depth, and breadth of which cannot be investigated, nor the immense wealth it contains exhausted. Of this fulness the poor are invited to receive freely, and multitudes from age to age have been enriched, and the treasure is still undiminished. None are sent away empty; and when all have been supplied, it will be full as at first.

4. Strength.—That energy and efficacy of his power, by which he accomplishes his holy purposes. Who can conceive of this? How just is the psalmist's reasoning, "He that formed the eye, shall not he see? He that planted the ear, shall not he hear?" Ps. xciv. 9. So we may say, How strong is he from whom all created strength is derived, and before whom the strength of all creatures, if collected into one effort, would be as chaff before the whirlwind! The Lord of all power and might speaks, and it is done; he commandeth, and it standeth fast. Though the waves of the stormy sea toss themselves, they cannot prevail (Ps. xciii. 3, 4); he checks them in the height of their rage, setting bounds to their violence which they cannot pass, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud billows be stayed," Job xxxviii. 10, 11. With equal sovereignty, certainty, and ease, he rules over moral agents. He formed the heart of man, and he can fill it with terror or with comfort in a moment, in any assignable circumstances. He can make it happy in a dungeon (Acts xvi. 25), or impress it with dismay and despair upon a throne, Dan. v. 5, 6. All hearts are thus incessantly under his influence. And the hedge of his promise and protection surrounds those who trust in him, as with mountains, and walls of brass and fire, impenetrable to the assaults of the powers of darkness, unless so far as he, for wise and holy ends, is pleased to give permission. With the arm of his strength he upholdeth them that are falling, and raiseth up them that are bowed down (Ps. cxlv. 14), and is, in one and the same instant, a present and immediate help in trouble to all who call upon him, Ps. xlvi. 1. Therefore they that abide under his shadow are safe; they pass unhurt through floods and flames, because their Redeemer is strong. And when, in defiance of all their enemies, he has brought them together in his heavenly kingdom, they will, with one consent, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength.

5. Honour.—He is the fountain of it. All the honour of his creatures, and of his people, is from him; as the sun beautifies and gilds the objects he shines upon, which, without him, are opaque and obscure. Because his people are precious in his sight, they are honourable. He clothes them with the garments of salvation, covers them with a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels, Is. lxi. 10. But who can speak of his own inherent honour, as God-man and Mediator! We must wait till we see him, without a cloud or vail, receiving the homage and adoration of angels and men. For as yet the one half cannot be told us. Then, however, it will be universally known, that he who possesses the fulness of wisdom and power, riches and strength is worthy to receive all honour. Ah! how different will he then appear, from that humble form he once assumed, when, for our sakes, he was a man of sorrows, despised, rejected, and nailed to the ignominious cross!

6. Glory.—The manifestation of God, that by which he is known and magnified, in the view of finite intelligences: the result, the combined effulgence of his holiness, grace, wisdom, truth, and love: this is his glory, and this glory is revealed and displayed in Christ. He is glorious in his works of creation and providence, but these do not fully exhibit his character. But in the Lamb upon the throne his glory shines, full-orbed. And all in heaven, and all in earth, who behold it, take up the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!—Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" Exod. xv. 11; Rev. xv. 3.

7. Blessing.—He is the author of all blessings, of all the happiness and good which his people receive, and he is the deserved object of their universal praise. The different senses in which we use the word *blessing*, taken together, may express that intercourse or communion which is between the head and the mystical members of his body. He blesses them effectually with the light of his countenance, with liberty, grace, and peace. He blesses them daily. His mercies are renewed to them every morning. He will bless them eternally. Blessed are the people who have this Lord for their God. They can make him no suitable returns, yet in their way they bless him. They admire, adore, and praise him. They call upon all the powers of their souls to bless him. They proclaim his goodness, and that he is worthy to receive the ascription of power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. In proportion to their attainments in this delightful exercise of worship, love, and gratitude, they enjoy a heaven upon earth; and to stand before him continually, to behold

his glory, to live under the unclouded beams of his favour, and to be able to bless and praise him as they ought, without weariness, abatement, interruption, or end, is what they mean when they speak of the heaven they hope for hereafter. Such is the blessedness of those who have already died in the Lord. They see his face, they drink of the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand, they cast down their crowns before him, and say, thou art worthy —Let us not be slothful (Heb. vi. 12), but followers of them who, through faith and patience, have finished their course, and are entered into the joy of their Lord.

Of all this glory and honour the scripture declares the Lamb that was slain to be worthy. Wisdom, riches, and strength, are his. His power is infinite, his authority supreme. He is the author and giver of all good. He has life in himself, and he is the life of all that live; the Lord and Head of the church and of the universe. Can language express, or can heart conceive, a higher ascription and acknowledgment than this? Can all this be due to a creature? to one of a derived and dependent character? Then surely the scripture would have a direct tendency to promote idolatry. Far be the thought from us! The scripture teaches us the knowledge of the true God, and the worship due to him. Therefore Messiah, the Lamb that was slain, is the true God, the proper and immediate object of the worship of angels and of men.

Let us therefore take up a lamentation for those who slight the glorious Redeemer, and refuse him the honour due to his name. Their mistake should excite, not our anger or scorn, but our pity and prayers. Are there any such amongst us? Alas, my fellow-sinners, you know not what you do! Alas! you know him not, nor do you know yourselves. I am well aware that a thousand arguments of mine will not persuade you; but I can simply tell you what would soon make you at least desirous of adopting our sentiments upon this subject. If he who has that power over the heart which I have been speaking of, was pleased to give you this moment a sense of the holiness and authority of God, and of your conduct towards him as his creatures, your stongest objections to the high honours we attribute to the Saviour would this moment fall to the ground, and you would be immediately convinced, that either Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, or that you must perish. You would no longer expect mercy, but in a way perfectly consonant with the righteousness and truth of God, declared in his word, and with the honour and purity of his moral government. This would lead you to perceive the necessity of an atonement, and the insufficiency of any atonement but that which the Lamb of God has made by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. ix. 26), and that the efficacy even of his mediation depends upon his divine character. The scriptural doctrines of the depravity of man, the malignity of sin, the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, the necessity and efficacy of his mediation, and the inevitable, extreme, and endless misery of those who finally reject him, are so closely connected, that if the first be rightly understood, it will open the mind to the reception of the rest. But till the first be known and felt, the importance and certainty of the others will be suspected, if not openly denied.

Though the doctrines I have enumerated are, in these sceptical days, too generally disputed and contradicted, I am fully confident that it is impossible to demonstrate them to be false. Upon the lowest supposition, therefore, they possibly may be true; and the consequences depending upon them, if they should be found true at last, are so vastly momentous, that even the peradventure, the possibility of their truth, renders them deserving of your most serious consideration. Trifle with yourselves no longer. If they be truths, they are the truths of God. Upon the same authority stands the truth of that gracious promise, that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Let me entreat you to make the experiment. This is the proper point to begin with. Instead of indulging reasonings and speculations, humble yourselves before the Lord, and pray for the light and influence which he has said he will afford to them who are willing to be taught. Read the scripture with deliberation, and do not labour to fortify yourselves against conviction. Break off from those practices, which your own consciences admonish you cannot be pleasing to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Then shall you know if you will sincerely follow on to know the Lord, Hos. vi. 3. But if not, if you will, in a spirit of levity, presume to decide upon points which you will not allow yourselves seriously to examine, should you at last perish in your obstinacy and unbelief, your ruin will be of yourselves. You have been faithfully warned, and we shall be clear of your blood.

SERMON L.

THE UNIVERSAL CHORUS.

(And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying). Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever! Rev. v. 13.

MEN have generally agreed to dignify their presumptuous and arrogant disquisitions on the works and ways of God with the name

wisdom, though the principles upon which they proceed, and the conclusions which they draw from them, are for the most part evident proofs of their depravity and folly. Instead of admiring the effects of his wisdom and power in the creation, they have rashly endeavoured to investigate the manner of its production. A variety of hypotheses have been invented to account for the formation of the world, and to state the laws by which the frame of nature is governed; and these different and inconsistent accounts have been defended with a magisterial tone of certainty, and an air of demonstration, by their respective authors, as though they had been bystanders and spectators when God spoke all things into being, and produced order out of confusion by the word of his power. They have, however, been much more successful in shewing the absurdity of the schemes proposed by others, than in reconciling their own to the sober dictates of plain common sense.

But if, by indulging their speculations on the creation of the world, the causes of the deluge, and similar subjects, their employment has been no better than weaving spiders webs, the result of their reasoning on morals has been much worse. Here they have with much industry hatched cockatrice-eggs (Is. lix. 5); and their labours have been not only fallacious, but mischievous. Their metaphysical researches, while they refuse the guidance of revelation, if pursued to their just consequences, will always lead into the labyrinths of scepticism, weaken the sense of moral obligation, rob the mind of the most powerful motives of right conduct, and of the only consolations which can afford it solid support in an hour of trouble. One insuperable difficulty which they will undertake to solve, though it does not properly lie in their way, is concerning the origin of evil. That evil is in the world, is felt and confessed universally. The gospel points out an effectual method of deliverance from it; but alas, the simple and infallible remedy is neglected, and men weary themselves with vain inquiries,

> And find no end, in wandering mazes lost.

The more they reason, the more they involve themselves in uncertainty and error, till at last they make lies their refuge, and adopt, with implicit credulity, as so many undoubted axioms, opinions, which are equally dishonourable to God, and contradictory to truth and experience, 2 Thess. ii. 11. Thus much is certain, that by the occasion of evil, the character of God is manifested with superior glory to the view of angels and men, who are in a state of holiness and allegiance, and a higher accent is thereby given to their praises; for now his justice and his mercy, which could not have been otherwise known, are revealed in the strongest light; and the redemption of sinners affords the brightest display of his wisdom and love.

The redeemed are represented as taking the first part in this sublime song, verses 8—10. The angels join in the chorus, verses 11, 12, which now becomes universal. All the angels, all the saints upon the earth, in the state of the dead, or *hades*, whether their bodies are buried under the earth, or in the sea, with one heart, aim, and voice, unite in worship and praise. In the preceding verse, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, are ascribed unto the Lamb; but here the ascription is unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. I shall not add to what I have already observed to you from the words of the doxology. A few remarks, which offer from this verse taken in connection with the former, will bring me to a conclusion of the whole subject. And oh! for a coal of fire from the heavenly altar to warm your hearts and mine, that our love, joy, and gratitude may be awakened into lively exercise, and that the close of our meditations on the Messiah may leave us deeply impressed with desires and well-grounded hopes of meeting ere long before the throne, to join with the angels and the redeemed in singing the praise of God and the Lamb!

I. The Lord Jesus is not only the Head of the church redeemed from among men, but of the whole intelligent creation that is in willing subjection to God. It belonged to his great design to gather together in one (to reduce under one head, as the Greek expression is), even in himself, all things that are in heaven and upon earth, Eph. i. 10. He is the Lord and the life both of angels and of men. Mutability and dependence are essential to the state of creatures, however exalted; and the angels in glory owe their preservation and confirmation in holiness and happiness to him. Hence they are styled the elect angels (1 Tim. v. 21), in distinction from those who left their first habitation, and sunk into sin and misery. Angels therefore constitute a branch of that great family which is named of him in heaven and earth. And having made peace by the blood of his cross, he has effected a reconciliation, not only between God and sinners, but also between angels and men. How those inhabitants of light are disposed to sinful men, considered as sinful, we may learn from many passages of scripture. They are devoted to God, filled with zeal for his honour, and wait but for his command to execute vengence upon his enemies. When Herod, infatuated by his pride, and by the flattery of the multitude, received their idolatrous compliment with complacence, an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory, Acts xii. 23. The pestilence which destroyed the people towards the end of David's reign, was under the direction of an angel (2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17), and David

saw him with his arm stretched out against Jerusalem. And in this prophecy angels are spoken of as employed in pouring forth the vials of wrath upon the earth. And still they are ready, we may believe, to avenge their Maker's cause upon the wicked when they are commissioned. And if the history of modern times was written by an inspired pen and events, as in the scriptures, were assigned to their proper causes, perhaps the death of many a haughty worm would be recorded in words to this effect—"And an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory." But, viewing sinners as the subjects of redemption, the angels copy from their Lord. They regard them with benevolence, and rejoice over every one that repenteth, Heb. i. 14. They willingly attend on them, and assist them, in ways beyond our conception. They esteem believers in Jesus as their fellow-servants, Rev. xxii. 9. We have reason to think, that they are present in our worshipping assemblies; and perhaps, always so present, that they could discover themselves to us in a moment, were it consistent with the rules of the divine government established in this lower world, suited to the state of those who are to walk by faith, not by sight. Thus far however differing in other respects, the angels and the redeemed are united and related in one common head, and have fellowship in worship and service. When sinners are enabled by grace to renounce this world, they are admitted to an honourable alliance with a better.

II. From hence we may form some judgment of the true nature and high honour of that spiritual worship, which is the privilege and glory of the church of God under the gospel-dispensation. When we meet in the name of Jesus, as his people, and with a due observance of his institutions, we come to the innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born (Heb. xii. 22, 23), the first born ones (for the expression is plural). We draw nigh by faith, to the very gate of heaven, to the holiest of all. Men unacquainted with spirituality, are soon weary even of the form of worship, unless their minds are amused by a splendid ceremonial. The first rise and subsequent increase of that pomp and pageantry, which in some countries has quite obscured the simplicity and beauty of gospel-worship, is to be ascribed to this indisposition of the human mind. Our thoughts while we are in a natural state, are too weak and wavering, and too gross to be pleased with a worship, in which there is nothing suited to affect the imagination by sensible objects. And therefore, when men think themselves wise, and profess to despise the pageantry which captivates the vulgar, their wisdom affords them no real advantage, if they have nothing better to substitute in the room of what they reject as insignificant. The very appearance of devotion will languish, they will grow remiss, and neglect the sabbath and public assemblies, for want of something to keep up their attention. We have abundant proof of this in our own land, and at this time. Protestants pride themselves in not being Papists, but, when the Protestant religion is understood to mean no more than a renunciation of the superstitious ceremonies of the church of Rome, it is, with respect to individuals, little, if at all, better than Popery itself. Among us enlightened Protestants, no expedient but preaching the gospel of Christ will be found sufficient to retain people in a stated observance of the Lord's day. But true believers, who understand and love the gospel, do indeed draw nigh to God; and they account a day in his courts better than a thousand (Ps. lxxxiv. 10), because they can take a part in the songs of heaven, and in spirit and in truth, worship him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb who redeemed them to God by his blood. They know by happy experience, that his promise, to be in the midst of those who assemble in his name, is truth. Their worship is not a mere bodily service, a lifeless form, a round of observances, which neither warm the heart, nor influence the conduct; but they are instructed, comforted, and strengthened, by waiting upon God. Their spiritual senses are exercised; they behold his glory in the glass of the gospel, they hear his voice, they feel an impression of his power and presence, they taste his goodness, and the virtue of that name, which is as ointment poured forth, perfumes their tempers and conversation.

III. Though the Lamb is worthy of all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; there is a distinct ascription of praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne.

The scripture, which alone can teach us to form right conceptions of God, and to worship him acceptably, guides us in a medium, between opposite errors and mistakes. Too many persons, ignorant of their own state as sinners, and of the awful majesty and holiness of the Most High, presume to think of him, to speak of him, and in their way, to speak to him, without being aware of the necessity of a Mediator. But they who are without Christ, who is the only door and way to the Father are without God, atheists in the world, Eph. ii. 12. There is a mistake likewise on the other hand, when, though the Deity of the Saviour be acknowledged, yet what we are taught of the ineffable distinction in the Godhead, is not duly attended to. It is written "In the beginning,—the Word was God, John i. 1. It is likewise written, "The Word was with God." This latter expression undoubtedly has a meaning, which though perfectly consistent, is not coincident with the former. The truth contained in it is proposed, not to our curiosity as a subject of specu

lation, but to our faith. I do not attempt to explain it. But, what God expressly declares, we are bound, upon the principles of right reason, to believe. For he is Truth, and cannot deceive us. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," 1 John v. 7. These three are frequently spoken of in the scripture—to each of them a distinct part in the economy of salvation is ascribed; to each of them the perfections and honours of Deity are attributed. Yet there are not three Gods, but one. Consequently these three are one God. This doctrine may be above our comprehension, but cannot be contrary to our reason, if it be contained in a revelation from God. If it be simply received upon the authority of the revealer, it approves itself to be true, for it is found to be a key to the whole scripture, which renders the general sense and scope everywhere consistent and plain. They who proudly reject it, and yet admit the Bible to be a divine revelation, are involved in difficulties from which all their sagacity and learning cannot free them. In vain they labour by singular interpretations, by the minutiæ of criticism, and by an appeal to various readings and ancient versions, which, in a few passages, differ from the copies more generally received—in vain they endeavour by these refinements, to relieve themselves, when pressed by the obvious and natural sense of a thousand texts, which confirm the faith and hope of plain christians. The gospel is designed for the poor. But the poor and unlearned would be at a great disadvantage, if the scripture could not be rightly understood without the assistance of such learning and such criticism as we often see pressed into the service. But the Holy Spirit graciously leads those who pray for his teaching, into such views of this high subject as are sufficient to comfort their hearts, and to animate their obedience. The faith of those who are taught of God, is exercised in their approaches to him, under two different modifications. Both are scriptural, and therefore both are safe, and witnessed to by his gracious acceptance and blessing.

1. They come to God by Christ. They have access through him, Eph. ii. 18. Unworthy to speak for themselves, they bow their knees in his name, Phil. ii. 10. Christians are sufficiently distinguished and described by saying, They come to God by him, Heb. vii. 25. They come to God, they cannot live without him in the world, as they once did. They are now conscious of wants and desires, which only God can satisfy; but they are conscious likewise that they are sinners, and therefore they durst not approach him, if they had not the invitation of his promise, and an assurance of an Advocate with the Father, 1 John ii. 2.

2. They come to God in Christ. He is the great Temple, in whom all fulness dwells (Col. i. 19; ii. 9): and they are not afraid of idolatry, when they worship and honour the Son even as the Father. This distinct application to God, in the person of the Son of his love, perhaps becomes more frequent and familiar as they advance in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, 2 Peter iii. 18. They who seek to him for deliverance from sin and misery, at first, I believe, chiefly consider him as the Advocate and High Priest, who, by the virtue of his atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. But when the apostle distributes Christians, according to their growth in grace, into the state of babes, young men, and fathers (1 John ii. 4), he speaks of a more distinct and appropriate knowledge of him who is from the beginning, as the peculiar privilege and distinguishing attainment of the fathers. He speaks of him who is from the beginning so often, that we can be at no loss to determine whom he intends by the expression. He applies it to him who was in the beginning with God (John i. 1), and whom he and the other apostles had heard, had seen with their eyes, and touched with their hands, 1 John i 1—3. An eminent divine* points out some special seasons in the Christian life, in which he thinks the peculiar pressures of the soul may obtain the most sensible and immediate relief, by direct application to the Saviour. But there are some believers who find themselves almost continually in one or other of the situations which he marks as occasional. However this may be, I am ready to take it for granted, that they who really and cordially believe the Deity of Christ, do at least at some seasons, and upon some occasions, expressly direct their prayers to him. If precedents be required to warrant this practice, the New Testament will furnish them in abundance. I shall select but a few. The apostle Paul bowed his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus; but he often prayed to the Lord Jesus. He prayed to him in the temple (Acts xxii. 17—21), and when he obtained that answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9. To him the prayer of the apostles and disciples was addressed previous to the lot, which was to determine a successor to Judas, Acts i. 24. And to him Stephen committed his departing spirit (Acts vii. 59), an act of trust and worship of the highest kind, and at the most solemn season. In short, it is a strange inconsistence, if any, who acknowledge his Deity, question the propriety of praying to him. What is it, more or less, than to question the propriety of praying to God?

IV. This solemn worship and praise is referred ultimately to him who sitteth upon the

* Dr Owen, in his Christologia

throne—to the great and glorious God, thus known and manifested in, and by, and with the Lamb that was slain.

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ will have a period. He will reign as Mediator, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet, and perfected his whole work. Then his kingdom in this sense will cease; he will deliver it up to the Father, that God may be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28. This passage is difficult, that is, the subject is too great for our faculties in their present state of imperfection fully to comprehend; for the difficulties we meet with in scripture are more properly to be ascribed to our ignorance. The Son, as man, is even now subject to the Father; and God is undoubtedly all in all, at present, and from everlasting to everlasting. But his kingdom here is to be taken figuratively for the subjects of his kingdom, his people, whom he received as a trust and a treasure. These he will deliver up, and the form of his administration and government over them will be changed. They will then have no more sins to confess; there will be no more dangers requiring the care and tenderness of a Shepherd, no enemies to be controlled, and the ordinances and means of grace, accommodated to their wants and weakness, while in this world, will be no longer necessary. But Messiah, the Lamb that was slain, will ever be the head and Lord of the creation, the medium of communication of the light and love of God to his people, and God in him, the object of their eternal adoration and praise.

Then the grand, ultimate, final cause of all the manifestations of God will be completely obtained. The glory of the great Creator and Lawgiver, the splendour of all his perfections, will for ever shine, without a vail or cloud, and with a brightness which could not have been known by creatures, had not the entrance of evil given occasion for a display of his wisdom and love, in over-ruling it to the praise of his glorious grace.

Thus, according to the measure of my ability and experience, I have endeavoured to point out to you the meaning and importance of the well-chosen series of scriptural passages which are set to music in the Oratorio of the Messiah. Great is the Lord Messiah, and greatly to be praised! I have attempted to set before you a sketch of what the scripture teaches us concerning his person, undertakings, and success,—the misery of those whom he came to save, the happiness to which he raises them, and the wonderful plan and progress of redeeming love. But who is sufficient for these things? Alas! how small a portion of his ways are we able to trace! But I would be thankful, that the desire of attempting this great subject was put into my heart, and that having obtained help of God, I have been preserved and enabled to finish my design. Imperfect as my execution of it has been, I cannot doubt that the various topics I have been led to insist on are the great truths of God. For what is properly my own, the defects and weaknesses which mix with my best services, I entreat his forgiveness, and request your candour. But I do not hesitate to say, that the substance of what I have advanced deserves and demands your most serious attention.

It is probable, that those of my hearers who admire this Oratorio, and are often present when it is performed, may think me harsh and singular in my opinion, that of all our musical compositions this is the most improper for a public entertainment. But while it continues to be equally acceptable, whether performed in a church or in the theatre, and while the greater part of the performers and of the audience are the same at both places, I can rate it no higher than as one of the many fashionable amusements which mark the character of this age of dissipation. Though the subject be serious and solemn in the highest sense, yea, for that very reason, and though the music is, in a striking manner, adapted to the subject, yet, if the far greater part of the people who frequent the Oratorio are evidently unaffected by the Redeemer's love, and uninfluenced by his commands, I am afraid it is no better than a profanation of the name and truths of God, a crucifying the Son of God afresh. You must judge for yourselves. If you think differently from me, you will act accordingly.—Yet permit me to hope and to pray, that the next time you hear the Messiah, God may bring something that you have heard in the course of these sermons, nearly connected with the peace and welfare of your souls, effectually to your remembrance.

I would humbly hope, that some persons, who were strangers to the power and grace of Messiah, when I entered upon this service, are now desirous of seeking him with their whole hearts. Yes, I trust I have not laboured wholly in vain. The gospel is the rod of his strength (Psal. cx. 2), which, when accompanied by the power of his Spirit, produces greater effects than the wonder-working rod of Moses. It causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live. A faithful minister will account a single instance of success a rich recompence for the labour of a life. May this joy be mine! May the Lord encourage you to go on seeking him! Then he will surely be found of you. An open door is set before you (Rev. iii. 8), and if you are truly willing to enter, none shall be able to shut it.

But may I not fear, that I am still speaking to others, who, to this hour, have no cordial admiring thoughts of the great Saviour? Alas! should you die in your present frame of mind! let me, once more, entreat you to consider what your situation and employment

will be, when all his redeemed people, and all his holy angels, shall join in worshipping and praising him, in the great day of his appearance.

Unless you repent, lay down your arms, and submit to his golden sceptre, your doom is already pronounced. Awful are the words of the Lord, by the prophet, and very applicable to your case, if (which may his mercy prevent!) you should die in your sins. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit," Isa. lxv. 13, 14. If the scribes and Pharisees were filled with envy and grief when the children in the temple sung Hosanna to the Son of David (Matth. xxi. 15), what must be their anguish and remorse, their rage and despair, when the whole creation shall join in his praise? If your thoughts of him now are like theirs, tremble at your danger; for unless you repent, your lot must be with them hereafter.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

THE SUBJECT AND TEMPER OF THE GOSPEL-MINISTRY,

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER, 19, 1779.

WHEN THE AUTHOR ENTERED ON HIS FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE IN THAT CHURCH.

———*Speaking the truth in love.*—EPHESIANS, IV. 15.

THE words in the original have a more comprehensive sense than in our version, ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ. They extend no less to conduct than to speech, and comprise, in one short sentence, that combination of integrity and benevolence, which constitute the character of a true christian. But, as our morning service has been already much prolonged, I mean not to enlarge at present upon this important subject. I propose my text rather as a kind of motto, to introduce a brief account of the feelings, desires, and purposes of my heart, on this my first appearance before you. The inhabitants of these parishes, to whom I more immediately address myself, have a right to be informed, now the providence of God has placed me in this city, and in this church, of the views with which I have undertaken the important trust lately committed to me, and of the manner and spirit in which it is my desire to discharge it. If these inquiries be upon any of your minds, accept my answer in the words I have read: I came, and, by the grace of God, I hope to abide amongst you, "speaking the truth in love."

I should be utterly unworthy your attention, I should deserve your contempt and detestation, if, under the solemn character of a minister of Jesus Christ, and with a professed regard for his service and the good of souls, I should presume to speak any thing amongst you, but what I verily believe in my conscience to be the truth. The apostles were ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. v. 24), and we, however inferior in other respects, are so far concerned in this part of their character, as to be equally bound to conform to the instructions of our Lord and Master. The Bible is the grand repository of the truths which it will be the business and the pleasure of my life to set before you. It is the complete system of divine truth, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken (Rev. xxii. 18, 19), with impunity. Every attempt to disguise, or soften any branch of this truth, in order to accommodate it to the prevailing taste around us, either to avoid the displeasure, or to court the favour of our fellow-mortals, must be an affront to the majesty of God, and an act of treachery to men. My conscience bears me witness, that I mean to speak the truth among you May the grace of God enable me always to do it. The principal branches of the truth as it is in Jesus, according to St Paul's expression, are summarily contained in the Articles, which I have just now read and given my solemn assent to in your hearing. These I acknowledge and adopt as a standard of sound doctrine, not merely because they are the Ar

ticles of our Church, but because, upon mature and repeated examination, I am persuaded they are agreeable to the scriptures. I am to enlarge on the declarations of the scripture and of the Articles concerning the depravity of fallen man, the evil of sin, the method of salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I am to bear testimony to the dignity and excellency of the Redeemer's person and characters, the suitableness of his offices, the efficacy of his blood, and obedience to death on the behalf of sinners, and his glory as Head of the Church, and Lord of heaven and earth. I am to set before you the characters, obligations, and privileges of those who believe in his name; and to prove that the doctrines of the grace of God are doctrines according to godliness, which, though they may be abused by men of corrupt minds, have in themselves, when rightly understood, a direct and powerful tendency to enforce universal obedience to the commands of God, and to promote the peace and welfare of civil society. I am likewise to warn all who hear me, of the sin and danger of rejecting the great salvation revealed by the gospel. These will be the subjects of my ministry; and, if what I shall offer upon these heads be agreeable, not only to the Articles which I have subscribed, but to the scriptures, which we all profess to believe, it must of course be admitted that I shall speak the truth.

But the cause of truth itself may be discredited by improper management; and therefore the scripture, which furnishes us with subject-matter for our ministry, and teaches us what we are to say, is equally explicit as to the temper and spirit in which we are to speak. Though I had the knowledge of all mysteries (1 Cor. xiii. 1), and the tongue of an angel to declare them, I could hope for little acceptance or usefulness, unless I was to speak in love. The gospel is a declaration of the astonishing love of God to mankind; it exhibits the perfect exemplar of love in the character of him, who, when upon earth in the form of a servant, went about doing good (Acts x. 38), and exerted the most unbounded benevolence to all around him. The servant of the Lord, of that meek and merciful Saviour, who wept over his avowed enemies, and prayed for his actual murderers while nailing him to the cross, learns at his Saviour's feet to bear a cordial love to all mankind. Man, considered as the creature of God, is the noblest and most important of his works in the visible creation, formed by him who originally made him for himself, with such a vastness of desire, such a capacity for happiness, as nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy; formed to exist in an eternal unchangeable state. And even fallen man, though depraved and perverted, guilty, and, in his present state, obnoxious to eternal misery, is yet capable of being restored to the favour of God, and renewed into his image, of serving him here, and being happy with him for ever. Whoever therefore has tasted of the love of Christ, and has known by his own experience the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, yea he is constrained to love his fellow-creatures. He loves them at first sight: and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel and a care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God (Rom. xii. 1), and even while he warns them by his terrors, 2 Cor. v. 11. Surely I durst not address you from this place, if I could not with sincerity, at least, if not with equal warmth, adopt the apostle's words, and say, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we are willing to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also (were it possible), because ye were dear unto us," 1 Thess. ii. 8.

This love which my heart bears, I offer as a plea for that earnestness and importunity which I must use. I came not to amuse you with subjects of opinion or uncertainty, or even with truths of a cold, speculative, uninteresting nature, which you might receive without benefit, or reject without detriment; but to speak the truths of God, truths of the utmost importance to the welfare of your souls in time and in eternity. If I love you, therefore, I cannot be content with delivering my message; my spirit must, and will be deeply engaged for its success. I cannot be content with the emoluments annexed to my office—I seek not yours, but you (2 Cor. xii. 14); that you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge (Ephes. iii. 19); that you may be delivered from the power of this evil world (Gal. i. 4), and that I and you may at length stand accepted before the throne of God; in a word, that by a blessing from on high, accompanying my poor labours, I may both save myself, and them that hear me, 1 Tim. iv. 16. These are the aims and ends which I hope always to have in view, and therefore love will prompt me to be faithful and earnest.

Too often the due reception of the truth is greatly impeded by the cares, the businesses, or the amusements of the world. We find many of our hearers, alas! too happy, or too much engrossed, to afford us that attention we have a right to claim, considering the weight of our message, and the authority under which we speak. But God, in mercy to the souls of men, frequently suits the appointments of his providence, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace. He prepares for them what they do not desire for themselves, seasons for leisure, retirement, and reflection. This is one gracious design of the various afflictions of human life. When he visits with sickness or pain, crosses and disappointments—when

our cisterns are broken, and our gourds wither —when the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke (Ezek. xxiv. 16), or we meet with a thorn or sting, where our fond hearts were expecting only pleasure—then perhaps the truths which were heard with too much indifference in the hour of prosperity, may be more regarded. My love will prompt me to be always near you, waiting for such seasons, and ready upon the first intimation (for I mean not to intrude myself), to offer my sympathy, my prayers, my best advice. Though I shall have but little time for visits of mere ceremony; to visit you as a minister, and to assist you to the utmost of my power in making a right improvement of the providences of God, is a service which I shall always owe you from a principle of duty, and which I hope always to be glad to render from a principle of love.

If the grace of God, without which I can do nothing, should thus enable me to speak the truth in love, may I not hope for your favourable attention? Would it not imply an unjust reflection upon your candour, to suppose that any of you will be angry with one who only wishes to speak the truth in love? Certainly I can as yet have no particular reason to expect an unkind return from any individual among you, because I am a stranger to you all. But the scripture teaches, what experience and observation abundantly confirm, that the doctrines of divine truth are so mysterious in themselves, and so opposite and mortifying to the opinion mortals are prone to entertain of their own wisdom and goodness, that persons of very amiable characters in common life, are too often amongst the warmest opposers of the ministers who dare faithfully and plainly persevere in speaking the truth. Should I have this trial to meet with from any of you, still I hope to speak the truth in love, and to remember that I am a follower of him who only returned kindness for hard usage. I hope to consider, that if any oppose, it is because they know not what they do; and to bear in mind, that I myself was once a scorner and despiser of the gospel which I now preach; that I stand here as a pattern of the long-suffering of God; and that having obtained mercy myself, I have encouragement, from my own case, to hope that the strongest prejudices may be softened by the power of his grace.

Let me close with one observation. The transactions of this day, and the consequence of it will not be soon forgotten. They will be registered in the annals of eternity. As surely as we are now met together, so surely we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 10. Then I must give an account of my ministry, and you of the manner in which you received it. If I speak the truth—it is at the peril of my hearers to treat it with contempt, or even with neglect. But I would hope better things, even that the Lord, the Holy Spirit, will prepare our hearts to receive with meekness that engrafted word, which is able to save our souls, James i. 11.

I only add my earnest request for a frequent and fervent remembrance in your prayers, that the Father of mercies, the God of all wisdom, may so influence my spirit, that no part of my conduct may be unsuitable to what I have at this time professed. That speaking the truth in love, and commending it by a conversation becoming the gospel (Phil. i. 17), my labours and my life may be acceptable and serviceable among you. I trust that I, on my part, shall not cease to pray, that his blessing may rest upon you, upon your persons, your families, and upon all your concerns, and more especially for the welfare and comfort of your souls—that he may guide you by his counsel through this life, and afterwards receive you to his glory, Psalm lxxiii. 24.

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF SUCH A NATION AS THIS,

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1781.

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR

A

GENERAL FAST.

Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? JEREMIAH, v. 29.

THREE times (Jer. v. 9; ix. 9), the Lord God repeats by his prophet this alarming question. Their ingratitude and obstinacy were so notorious, their sins so enormous and aggravated, the sentence denounced against them, however severe, was so undeniably just, that partial as they were to themselves, God is pleased to appeal to their own consciences, and to make them judges in their own cause; inviting or rather challenging them to offer any plea, why his forbearance and patience, which they had so long despised, should be still afforded them.

But the form of the question will not permit us to confine the application to Israel or Judah. The words are not, "On this nation" particularly, but "On such a nation as this." The Lord, the Governor of the earth, has provided in the history of one nation, a lesson of nstruction and warning to every nation under the sun; and the nearer the state and spirit of any people resemble the state and character of Judah, when Jeremiah prophesied among them, the more reason they have to tremble under the apprehension of the same or similar judgments.

God brought Israel out of Egypt with an outstretched arm, divided the Red Sea before them, led them into the wilderness by a cloud and pillar of fire. fed them with manna, and gave them water from the rock. He planted them in a good land, and though they often sinned and were often punished, they were distinguished by many tokens of his presence and effects of his goodness, above any other nation. In the time of Solomon they possessed the height of human prosperity, but they soon rebelled and involved themselves in increasing troubles. And, though the efforts and examples of Hezekiah and Josiah produced a temporary reformation, and procured a temporary respite, they went on, upon the whole, from bad to worse, till the measure of their iniquity being filled up, and the season of God's long-suffering at an end, he directed the march of Nebuchadnezzar against them, who, because he was the appointed instrument of divine vengeance, could not fail of success. The temple and city of Jerusalem were burnt, the land desolated, the greater part of the inhabitants destroyed, and the survivors led captives into a far distant land.

We likewise are a highly favoured people, and have long enjoyed privileges which excite the admiration and envy of surrounding nations; and we are a sinful, ungrateful people: so that when we compare the blessings and mercies we have received from the Lord, with our conduct towards him, it is to be feared we are no less concerned with the question in my text than Israel was of old. This is the point I propose to illustrate, as suitable to the design for which we are at this time professedly assembled.

Though the occasion will require me to take some notice of our public affairs, I mean not to amuse you with what is usually called a political discourse. The Bible is my system of politics. There I read, that the Lord reigns (Psal. xcvii. 1); that he doeth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth (Dan. iv. 35); that no wisdom, understanding, counsel, or power, can prevail without his blessing (Prov. xi. 30); that as righteousness exalteth a nation, so sin is the reproach, and will even totally be the ruin of any people, Prov. xiv. 34. From these and other maxims of a like import, I am learning to be still, and to know that he is God. My part, as a minister of the gospel of peace, is not to inflame, but, if possible, to soothe and sweeten the spirits of my hearers; to withdraw their attention from the instrumental and apparent causes of the calamities we feel or fear, and to fix it upon sin, as the original and proper cause of every other evil. As a peaceful and a loyal subject, I profess and inculcate obedience to the laws of my country, to which I conceive myself bound by the authority of God's command, and by gratitude for the civil and religious liberty I possess. For the rest, political disquisitions, except immediately connected with scriptural principles, appear to me improper for the pulpit at all times, and more especially unseasonable and indecent on a day of public humiliation. I hope we are now met, not to accuse others, but to confess our own sins—not to justify ourselves, but to plead for mercy.

May it please God, therefore, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to impress the consciences of all present, and to make us attentive to our own immediate concerns, while I endeavour,

I. Briefly to delineate the state of the nation; or to shew you what a nation this is.

II. To consider in what manner the righteous Judge and Governor of the earth might justly avenge himself of such a nation as this.

III. To enquire, whether there be any hope that such a nation as this, can yet escape the impending ruin with which it is threatened? and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought and expected?

I. In order to estimate the state of the nation, we must attend to two views, which, when contrasted, illustrate each other, and in their combination constitute our national character, and discriminate it, not only from that of every nation around us, but from all the kingdoms recorded in the history of past ages, —I mean our national privileges, and our national sins.

With regard to the first head,—the peculiar privileges which, by the favour of Divine Providence, we have enjoyed as a people, I must be brief. A full detail of them would require a volume. Though the island of Great Britain exhibits but a small spot upon a map of the globe, it makes a splendid appearance in the history of mankind, and has for a long space of time been signally under the protection of God, and the seat of peace, liberty, and truth. When Christendom had groaned for ages under the night of Papal superstition, the first light of Reformation dawned amongst us by the preaching and writings of Wickliff. From that time we have possessed the knowledge of the gospel, and God has had a succession of witnesses in our land; they have been at different periods exposed to suffering, and many of them were called to seal their testimony with their blood, but they could neither be intimidated nor extirpated. In Luther's time, when the pillars of Popery were more publicly and generally shaken, we were among the first who were animated and enabled to shake off the yoke of Rome; and God has often since remarkably interposed to preserve us from being brought into that bondage a second time. The spirit of persecution, under various forms, has again and again attempted to resume its power, but has been as often restrained and defeated. Civil commotions likewise stand upon record in our annals, and our forefathers have felt miseries of which we can form but a very imperfect idea. But they suffered and struggled for us. The event of every contest and revolution contributed gradually to establish that happy basis of government which we call *The British Constitution*; and together with these advances in favour of liberty, an increase of commerce, wealth, and dominion, has been afforded us. From that distinguished æra, the Revolution, and more especially since the accession of the present Royal Family, we have enjoyed such an uninterrupted series of peace and prosperity, as cannot be paralleled in the history of any nation we have heard of, not excepting even that of Israel. I call our peace uninterrupted; for the efforts of rebellion in the reigns of our two last kings, were so speedily crushed, and were productive of so few calamities, except to the unhappy aggressors, that they are chiefly to be noticed as instances of the goodness of the Lord, who, notwithstanding we were then a sinful people, was pleased to fight our battles, and put our enemies to shame. I call it uninterrupted, for though we have been engaged as principals in several foreign wars, and the storm fell with dreadful weight upon other countries, we at home knew little of the war, but from the public prints, which usually, after the first or second year were filled with accounts of the successes and victories which the Lord of hosts (alas, by how few was he acknowledged!) gave to our fleets and armies.—When the last war terminated, we were at the height of national honour and power. Our arms were victorious, and our flags triumphant wherever our operations had been directed in the most distant and opposite parts of the globe. What an accession of em-

pire and riches did we then acquire, while we were sitting (if I may so speak) under our vines and fig-trees undisturbed; and while a considerable part of Germany, rather involved, than properly interested in our disputes, was almost desolated by fire and sword! And notwithstanding our increasing provocations, every succeeding year has afforded signal proofs, that though the Lord is displeased with us, he has not yet forsaken us. If in some instances he has justly disappointed our expectations, he has in others appeared no less remarkably in our favour, defeating the designs of our enemies, protecting our commerce, and affording us in general more plentiful harvests at home, since the war has rendered supplies from abroad more precarious and difficult. Add to our internal peace, wealth and plenty, the inviolable immunity both of persons and property, in which we are preserved by the spirit and administration of our laws; and that unrestrained liberty which people of all sentiments and denominations possess and exercise, of worshipping God in the way they think most agreeable to his will. Must not a due consideration of these things constrain us to say, He hath not dealt so with any nation?

What could the Lord have done more for his vineyard? Is. v. 4. How could he have laid a people under stronger obligations to his service? What returns might he not expect from such a nation as this? But alas! we have requited him evil for good! Such a nation as this is very imperfectly described by an enumeration of privileges. I have a more painful task now to attend to; I should enumerate (were it possible) our national sins. It is but a sketch I can offer upon this immense and awful subject. But enough is obvious, and at hand, to make us tremble, if we regard the scripture, and do in our hearts believe that there is a God that governs the earth (Psal. lviii. 11), I wish you to keep in mind, as I proceed, the slight view I have given of the favours God has bestowed upon us. The recollection of his mercies is necessary to give a proper sense of the colouring and aggravation of our sins. It is often pleaded, that, sinful as we are, we are not more depraved in morals and practice than the inhabitants of France or Italy, or the other nations of Europe. I much question the truth of this plea. I am afraid that, in some instances at least, we are more corrupt and profligate than any nation now existing. But admitting that France or Italy equal, or even exceed us in open and positive wickedness, if they fall short of us in advantages for knowing the will of God, if they are not equally enriched by the bounties of his providence, if he has not so signally appeared on their behalf as he has on ours, their sins, however enormous or numerous, are not attended with equal aggravations; we must fix upon a nation (if such could be found) that is upon a par with us in the blessings of gospel-light, of civil and religious liberty, before we can properly form a comparison, or have any just reason for supposing that our sins are not greater than theirs.

The magnitude of our national debt is a frequent topic of conversation. We have indeed but an indistinct idea of a number not very far short of two hundred millions, yet we can form some conception of it. But our national debt of sin is beyond all the rules and powers of arithmetical computation. The holiness, authority, and goodness of God (which are infinite) afford the only proper measures by which to judge of the horrid evil of the sins committed against him.

The sin of a nation is properly the aggregate or sum-total of all the sins committed by every individual residing in that nation. But those may be emphatically called national sins which, by their notoriety, frequency, or circumstances, contribute to mark the character or spirit of one nation, as distinct from another. It is to be hoped that some species of sins amongst us have not yet become national. They are rather exotics, not perfectly familiarized to the soil, or prevalent in every part of the land. I shall confine myself to a few of the particulars which are more directly characteristic of this nation, and at this time.

1. The maxims and usage generally prevalent among a people, if contrary to the rule of God's word, are national sins. If customary, they are national; if inconsistent, with the precepts of scripture, they must be sinful. A woe is denounced (Isa. v. 20) against those who call evil good, and good evil; but this dreadful abuse of language, sentiment, and conduct, can only be avoided by making the inspired writings the standard of our judgment. In a land that bears the name of Christian, adultery is deemed gallantry; murder, in some cases, is a point of honour; avarice is prudence; profuseness wears the mask of generosity; and dissipation is considered as innocent amusement. On the other hand, meekness is accounted meanness of spirit, and grace is branded with the opprobrious names of melancholy and enthusiasm. Habituated from our infancy to the effects of these prepossessions, and more or less under their influence, very few of us are duly sensible how utterly repugnant the spirit and temper of the world around us is to the genius and spirit of the christianity we profess. It would, I think, appear in a much more striking light to an intelligent and unbiassed observer, who upon hearing that Great Britain was favoured with the knowledge of the true religion, should visit us from some very remote country with a view of sharing in our advantage. If I could make the tour of the kingdom with such a stranger, and shew him what is transacting in the busy and in the gay world, in city, court, and country; if I could describe to him the

persons he would see at our theatres and public places, at Newmarket, at contested elections, and explain the motives and aims which bring them together; if I could introduce him into the families of the great, the reputed wise, and the wealthy,—from these data, together with the ignorance and licentiousness of the populace, which must unavoidably engage his notice wherever he went, I apprehend he would not be long at a loss to form a tolerable judgment of our national character. And if after this survey, he were attentively to read the New Testament, I think he must allow, that, admitting it was a revelation from God, our national character was neither more nor less than the union and combination of our national sins. He could not but perceive, that infidelity, pride, sensuality, greediness of gain, strangely coupled with thoughtless profusion, contempt of God, and a daring opposition to his will, constitute the leading features of our portrait as a nation.

2. If there be sins, which, though not expressly enjoined, are authorized, and to people who regard man more than God, rendered in a manner necessary by the sanction of the legislature, these, and especially in a free country, may be deemed national sins. Here I feel myself embarrassed. As a private member of society, full of respect and reverence for the authority to which, by the providence and will of God, I owe a willing and thankful subjection, I could wish to be entirely silent. But I likewise bear another character. As a minister of the gospel, I stand here before a higher Master. In his service I am commanded to be bold and faithful, and I dare not in conscience, especially at such a time and on such an occasion as this, wholly suppress my sentiments. But I wish to speak with all the tenderness and delicacy the subject will admit.

In this land of liberty, the measures of government and of parliament are canvassed with great freedom, often indeed with a very offensive intemperance and indecency. It is, however, one important privilege of our happy constitution, that British subjects have a right of presenting respectful petitions either to the throne or to the senate, when such measures are in contemplation as are apprehended may prove detrimental to the interests of the nation or of individuals: a right which, upon the ground of real or pretended grievances, has been abundantly exercised of late years. But it is long since the honour of God and the interests of true religion have been the objects of an address or petition from any corporate body in the kingdom. This indifference of all parties to the cause of God, when all are so attentive and feeling in cases where they think their own temporal concerns affected, warrants one to consider the acts of the legislature, while no alteration is desired by those on whom they are binding, as the acts of the whole nation. Even the edicts of an arbitrary prince, whose will supplies the place of law, might involve a nation in guilt, if he enjoined what was contrary to the commands of God, and they through fear obeyed him. Much more then may laws, made by the representatives of a free people, be considered as acts of the community, if they excite no constitutional endeavour for relief.

I am far from supposing that any of our laws now in force were formed with an intention of promoting sin. But some of them, through the prevailing depravation of morals amongst us, do it eventually. For instance, the Test and Corporation acts, which require every person who has a post under government, or a commission in the army or navy, to qualify himself for his office by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, would occasion no sin, if men were generally influenced by the fear of God, or even by a principle of integrity. They would then rather decline places of honour or profit, than accept them upon such terms, if they were conscious that their sentiments or conduct were repugnant to the design of that institution. But as the case stands at present, while gain is preferred to godliness, and the love of distinction or lucre is stronger than the dictates of conscience, we frequently see professed infidels and notorious libertines approach the Lord's table as a matter of course, and prostituting the most solemn ordinance of christianity to their ambition or interest. The great number and variety of appointments civil and military, which cannot be legally possessed without this qualification, render the enormity almost as common as it is heinous. If the Lord be a God of knowledge, he cannot be deceived. If he be a God of truth and holiness, he will not be mocked. I am afraid we have been long guilty of a contemptuous profanation of the body and blood of Christ.

The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury, which perhaps may eminently be styled our national sin. Many of them it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may, and do strictly observe them; but it is to be feared, the greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed without hesitation, and without any design of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced, that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy-body or a fool. Yet they must be tendered, and must be taken as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of church-wardens and constables who are yearly sworn, is very great; and as these offices are chiefly held by

rotation, in the course of a few years, they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many or how few of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that, while some, like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and while some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit, the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. To this source we may ascribe much of that profligacy and contempt of religion, which we now are called to mourn over. The frequency of oaths, the irreverent manner in which they are administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit through the land.

Where the laws have expressly interposed to enforce the commands of God, if they are suffered by general consent to lie dormant, and are not carried into execution, the enormities which flow from such connivance, come under the denomination of national sins. The profanation of the Lord's day, drunkenness, profane swearing, are contrary, not only to the precepts of scripture, but to the laws of the land; and yet they could hardly be more prevalent though there were no statutes in force against them. As these evils are not apparently detrimental to the revenue or to commerce, they are seldom taken notice of, except when connected with some act of trespass or injury to individuals. Very few magistrates are concerned to enforce the observation of these laws; and if private persons sometimes attempt it by information, they meet but little success, they obtain but little thanks. The arts of pleading, the minutiæ and niceties of forms are employed to entangle and discourage them, and to screen offenders. Their endeavours are usually treated as officious and impertinent, and they are stigmatized with the invidious name of *informers*. In their own cause they are allowed to be active;, but a man must have a good share of resolution, or rather of divine grace, who can withstand the reproach and scorn he will bring upon himself, if he dare to be active in the cause of God.

My subject, alas! is almost boundless! But our time prescribes limits to my discourse. I must, however, hint my apprehension, that acts of oppression and violence, in some parts (at least) of our widely-extended settlements, have contributed to enhance and aggravate our national sin. If the welfare and the lives of thousands have been sacrificed to the interest of the few; if the ravages of cruelty and avarice, though notorious and undeniable, have met with no public censure or punishment, may we not expect that God himself will avenge the oppressed, and plead their cause, not only against their actual oppressors, but against the community that refused to hear their cries and redress their wrongs?

I am pained likewise to observe how little the calamities of war and the shedding of blood are laid to heart. War, when most necessary and unavoidable, is a dreadful evil; one of the most severe scourges with which the great God visits a sinful world. But, because we, through his mercy, know no more of it at home than by what we hear of the sufferings of others; to their sufferings, if we account them enemies, the hearts of many are unfeeling as a stone. They contemplate with composure and apparent satisfaction, not only the horrors of a field of battle, but the devastations, flames, rapes, and murders, which too often mark the progress of conquest, or the retreat of disappointed rage. May the Lord God keep such miseries far from us! May we never have to say, As we have heard, so we have seen. But there is a temper and spirit too prevalent among us, which calls for humiliation: A thirst of revenge, an eagerness for war, as affording opportunity for pillage and plunder, and an indifference to the distresses of our fellow-creatures, more answerable to the idea we form of the savages in America, than to that of a civilized and christian people.

If we consider the nation with a more particular respect to the profession of religion amongst us, the prospect is equally dark Though the Articles and Liturgy, which are still retained as a public standard, express the doctrines and spirit of the Reformation, the truths upon which they are founded are sunk into disrepute. They are heard from few pulpits, they are to be met with in few books of modern divinity. The ministers who have courage to preach agreeably to their required subscriptions are discountenanced and slighted, if not openly opposed. In a word, the gospel of Christ, the truth as it is in Jesus, is little known amongst us, and where it is published, is rejected by a great majority of every rank. Yet, by the mercy of God, it has been considerably revived and spread amongst us of late years, and (I hope) is still spreading. There is a remnant amongst us who sigh and mourn for the abominations of the times, and have a humble and awful sense of the judgments of God declared against sin. They see black clouds gathering apace around us, and their hearts tremble at the apprehension of what he may justly inflict upon such a nation as this. But even among the people of different denominations who profess the truth, there is much to be lamented. Alas! what sinful conformity to the world! what coldness and indifference where we ought to be warm, and what unchristian heat and fierceness in enforcing or exploding lesser differences in sentiment or in modes of worship.

May we not fear, lest, for the abatement of christian love, the violence of party spirit, and the abuse of religious liberty, the Lord should visit his professing people with a rod, even though he were still to exercise patience towards the nation at large?

Let us then, having premised this brief, but awful delineation of our present state, proceed to consider,

II. What we have just reason to expect, if the Lord should speak to us in his displeasure, and avenge himself of such a nation as this! Two obvious topics offer themselves to assist our inquiries.

1. What we learn from scripture, and from general history, of God's usual methods in the government of the world. He avenged himself on the old world, by a deluge; on Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven. Where are now the mighty empires which once extended over a great part of the earth? The Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman governments, arose and perished in succession. What were Cyrus, Alexander, and other conquerors, whose victories decided the fate of nations, but instruments of divine vengeance? The sins of the people against whom they went, and a secret commission from the Lord of hosts, directed their march and ensured their success. He has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness, but the award of that final tribunal will be personal, to each one according to his works. Communities, as such, in their collective capacity, are visited and judged in the present life. And in this respect, the scripture considers nations as individuals: each having an infancy, growth, maturity, and declension. Every succeeding generation accumulates the stock of national sin, and there is a measure of iniquity which determines the period of kingdoms. Till this measure is filled up, the patience of God waits for them, but then patience gives way to vengeance.

Such has been his uniform procedure from the earliest times, of which either sacred or profane history affords us any information: and undoubtedly a day will come when the prosperity of this nation will cease. May it be at a yet very distant period! But there are alarming symptoms of decay already visible upon us. When God is exceedingly displeased with a people, it is not necessary, in order to their punishment, that he should bury them alive by an earthquake, or destroy them by lightning. If he only leave them to themselves, withdraw his blessing from their counsels, and his restraint from their passions, their ruin follows of course; according to the necessary order and connection of causes and effects. The destruction of Jerusalem affords a striking proof and illustration of this remark. Our Saviour foretold, that the calamities of that siege would be greater and more aggravated than had ever been known from the creation; and infidels must confess, that the relation of Josephus, who was an eye-witness of that catastrophe, exhibits such scenes of distress as cannot be paralleled in any other history. Yet the Roman armies, which were led on by an invisible hand to accomplish the prediction, were not headed by a Nero, or a Caligula, whose savage disposition and thirst of blood might have prompted them to unrelenting slaughter; but by Titus, who, for his singular moderation and clemency, obtained the title of *Delioiæ humani generis*, the friend and delight of mankind. He desired not their destruction, he entreated them to have pity on themselves; but in vain: they were judicially infatuated, and devoted to ruin. If God gives up a people to the way of their own hearts, they will, they must perish. When a general corruption of morals takes place, when private interest extinguishes all sense of public virtue, when a profligate and venal spirit has infected every rank and order of the state, when presumptuous security and dissipation increase in proportion as danger approaches; when, after repeated disappointments, contempt of God and vain confidence in imagined resources of their own grow bolder and stronger,—then there is reason to fear, that the sentence is already gone forth, and that the execution of it is at hand.

2. The progress of our public affairs for some years past, too evidently confirms these general principles, brings the application home to ourselves, and loudly warns us what we are yet to expect, if we persist in hardening ourselves against the Lord. How rapid the change we have seen! From what small beginnings to what extensive consequences! The cloud which now overspreads the heavens with blackness, was not long since no larger than a man's hand. I suppose none who were actively concerned in our public commotions during their early stage, had the least apprehension that things would have proceeded to such calamitous and diffusive extremities. But sin abounded, and the Lord was displeased. Thus we may easily account for every mistake and miscarriage; for the first rise, and the long continuance of the war. The connection between us and the Americans was too nearly founded in relation, too closely cemented by mutual interest, to be so suddenly broken, if their sins and ours had not concurred in operation to bring distress both upon them and us. After a great expense of treasure and blood, instead of the re-union we hoped for, we have been successively involved in war with France, Spain, and Holland. And it is possible that every power in Europe, either is, or soon will be, openly or secretly against us. Nor can I omit, upon this occasion, the unprecedented violence of the late dreadful hurricanes in the West Indies. Though infidels and petty reasoners will doubtless labour to persuade themselves that they proceeded merely from natu-

ral causes, christians, I trust, will acknowledge the voice of God speaking, and speaking to us out of the whirlwind. It is true, he spoke by them to our enemies likewise, for they likewise are sinners. May both they and we be humbled before him, and learn, that as sin instigates and arms us to destroy each other, so when he is pleased to take the work into his own hands, he can strike such a blow, as shall for the time suspend our feeble hostilities, and by involving us in a common calamity, make us, notwithstanding our enmity, the objects of mutual commiseration. "The Lord's hand is lifted up," Isa. xxvi. 11. This part of an ancient prophecy is fulfilled in our view: the next clause, "They will not see," is, alas! fulfilled likewise, by the amazing insensibility and infatuation which still prevails among us. It follows, "But they shall see." What still greater evils may overtake us, before this clause also is accomplished to the glory of God, and our due humiliation, who can say? Alas! who that loves his country, but must tremble at the prospects of the judgments yet impending over us, if he should still proceed to plead his own cause, till he is fully avenged on such a nation as this!——To relieve my thoughts, I gladly hasten to enquire,

III. Whether there be any hope that such a nation as this may yet escape deserved ruin; and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought, and expected? I confess I have little hopes of it, but upon one or other of the following suppositions.

1. If the Lord be graciously pleased to succeed the professed design of this day's service, and to put forth that power which accompanied his message by Jonah to Nineveh, so that a general spirit of repentance and humiliation may spread throughout the land—If he bow the hearts of both rulers and people, to confess and forsake those sins which have awakened his displeasure—If the laws which concern his honour, will, and worship, be speedily and impartially enforced; and profaneness and immorality discountenanced and suppressed—If, instead of trusting in fleets and armies, we acknowledge the Lord of hosts, and look up to him for a blessing—If men fearing God and hating covetousness (Exodus xviii. 21), are raised up to assist in our councils, and to stand forth in their country's cause; men who will rely on his guidance and protection, and disdain the little arts and intrigues on which alone short-sighted politicians depend for the success of their measures: Should I live to see such a happy internal change, I should hope, that notwithstanding our great provocations, the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, would be yet entreated for us; that he would turn from the fierceness of his anger, maintain our tranquillity at home, and, by his wisdom and his influence over the hearts of men, put an honourable and satisfactory end to the unhappy war in which we are engaged.

2. However the bulk of the nation may determine, if the remnant who know his name, and have tasted of his love, should be deeply impressed with a concern for his glory, and forsaking their little animosities and party-interests, should unite in application to the throne of grace, and be found in those duties and practices which their profession of the gospel, and the state of things around them require, there is yet hope. For the prayers of God's people have a powerful efficacy. The holy and benevolent importunity of Abraham would have prevailed in favour even of Sodom, if ten righteous persons had been found in it, Gen. xviii. When Sennacherib invaded Judea, had over-run the greatest part of the country, and thought Jerusalem would be an easy conquest, Hezekiah, though he took such precautions as prudence suggested, did not defeat him by arms (Isa. xxxvii.), but by prayer. In the prayers of true believers is our best visible resource. These are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. United prayer, humiliation of heart, a mourning for sin in secret, and a faithful testimony against it in public, will more essentially contribute to the safety and welfare of the nation, than all our military preparations without them. We boast of our navy, and it has often proved by the blessing of God our bulwark, but how easily can he who walketh upon the wings of the wind, dash the best appointed fleet to pieces against the rocks, or sink it like lead in the mighty waters! We boast of our troops; but he can easily cut them off with sickness, give them up to a spirit of discord, or impress them with a sudden terror, so that the stoutest heart shall tremble, and the mighty warriors turn pale and drop their weapons! A thousand unforeseen events and contingencies are always at his disposal, to blast and disappoint the best concerted enterprises; for that the race is not necessarily sure to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, is not only asserted in the scripture, but confirmed by the experience and observation of all ages, Psalm xxxiii. 16, 17; Ecclesiastes ix. 11. But his people are precious in his sight, and their prayers he will hear. Unknown and unnoticed as they are in the world, he highly values them. He has redeemed them by his blood. He inhabits them by his Spirit. He has prepared heaven for them, and the earth itself is continued for their sakes, and shall be destroyed when they are all removed from it. They are the light, the salt, the strength, and the safety of the nations among which they are dispersed, Matth. v. 13, 14. Except the Lord of hosts had left a small remnant of these among us, we should long ago have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah, Isa. i. 9. To his

attention to their prayers and concerns, I doubt not the preservation of this city at the time of the late horrible riots may be ascribed. I wish I could now recal to your minds the emotions which some of you then felt, when your countenances bore a strong impression of your inward anxiety. Those terrors came upon you unexpectedly, and though they are forgotten by too many, scenes equally distressing may present themselves before you are aware. O may he in mercy animate this remnant, now to stand in the breach as one man, and to wrestle for a sinful land! Then we may at least arise to the hope of the Ninevites, Who can tell but the Lord may turn from his fierce anger, that we perish not? Jonah, iii. 9.

Let me now close with an address,

1. To such of you in this assembly as fear the Lord. A part of you are poor and afflicted people, and by your obscure situation in life, are precluded from a very distinct knowledge of the causes, the present effects, and possible consequences of the war. You live in a happy ignorance of what passes in the world, and take no part in the disputes which, in many places, ensnare and embitter the spirits even of professors of the gospel. Your principles inspire you with sentiments of duty to government, with the love of peace, and with a just sense of the value of your privileges, civil and religious. But though you are poor, and can serve your country in no other way, you may serve it effectually by your prayers. You have access to the throne of grace. Intercede therefore for a land that lieth in wickedness, be concerned for the honour of his name, for the blindness and misery around you. It may be the Lord will be entreated of you, and for your sakes, and for the sake of such as you, command the destroying angel to stay his hand.

Those of you who have better opportunity of knowing the state of our public affairs, have likewise a more extensive sphere of service. You will, I hope, improve your influence in your families and connections, and by your advice and example, endeavour to awaken all with whom you converse to join in promoting the design of this day's service. I call upon all who have ears to hear, and eyes to see the voice and the hand of the Lord, the rich and the poor, the young and the aged, to be faithful, circumspect, and zealous in your several stations.

Should wrath be decreed, and there be no remedy, at least you shall prevail for yourselves. You shall know that the Lord whom you serve is a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and is mindful of them who put their trust in him. You can hardly be too much alarmed for the nation, but for yourselves you have no just cause of fear. We are commissioned to say to the righteous, It shall be well with him, Isa. iii. 10. The Saviour, to whom you have fled for refuge has all power in heaven and earth. He will keep you as the apple of his eye, and hide you under the shadow of his wings. He can screen you from evil, though thousands and ten thousands should suffer and fall around you. Or if he appoints you a share in suffering, he will be with you to support and comfort you, and to sanctify all your troubles. His word to you is, When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled, Matthew xxiv. 6. Fear not them who, at the most, can but kill the body. The light of his countenance is sufficient to cheer you in the darkest hour, and your best interest, your everlasting inheritance is safe beyond the reach of enemies, in a kingdom (how unlike the kingoms of the earth!) which cannot be shaken, Hebrews xii. 28. Your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 3, 4. Thither neither sin nor sorrow shall be able to follow you. Then your sun shall go down no more, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. In patience therefore possess your souls. Be not moved by appearances, but remember all your concerns are in the hands of him who loved you, and gave himself for you. Let those who know him not tremble when he ariseth to judgment, and to shake terribly the earth; but do you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, make him your fear and your dread, and he shall be to you for a sanctuary (Isaiah, viii. 13, 14); and in a little time he will come to receive you to himself, and to wipe all tears from your eyes.

2. But what can I say to the rest of the congregation: Though we are all met in the same place, and outwardly engaged in the same service, so that, to the eye of man, we may appear as one people, animated with one and the same desires, the eye of the Searcher of hearts sees and notices a real and important distinction amongst us. He draws with infallible certainty the line of separation. He knows who are truly on his side, whose hearts are tender (2 Chron. xxxiv. 27), who are afraid of his judgments, and are mourning for their own sins, and the sins of the nation: and he knows and sees that too many here have neither his fear nor his love abiding in them. You may comply with an outward form, and abstain from a meal, but you neither abstain from sin, nor desire to do so. To-day you look serious, and by your presence seem to assent to the confessions which have been made, and the prayers which have been offered in your hearing. To-morrow, I fear, will shew that all your semblance of seriousness was but hypocrisy: and that, though you drew nigh to God with your lips (Mark viii. 6), your hearts were far from him. But be not deceived, God will not be mocked. You have contributed largely to swell the measure of

our national sin; herein you have been hearty and persevering. Do not think that the lip-service of a single day will make any alteration either in your state or in your guilt. Rather that pretended humiliation, by which you act towards God as if you thought he was altogether such a one as yourselves (Ps. l. 21), is an aggravation of your wickedness, and no better than affronting him to his face. Yet I am glad of an opportunity of speaking to you. Oh, that I could prevail on you to seek him in earnest, while he is to be found! You cannot serve, or love, or trust him, unless you be born again. But Jesus is exalted to produce this change in the heart of a sinner, by the power of his Holy Spirit, and to give faith, repentance, and remission of sins. Could I convince you of this, the rest would be easy. Then, feeling your wants and misery, you would ask mercy of him, and asking you would surely receive; for he has said, Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. O Lord, do thou convince them by thine own power! Open the blind eyes, unstop the deaf ears, and turn the stony heart into flesh.

Till this be done you are neither fit to live, nor fit to die. What will you do in a day of public calamity, should you live to see it, if you should be despoiled of your earthly comforts, and have no share in the consolation of the gospel? But should the Lord answer prayer and prolong our national prosperity, still you must be ruined unless you are saved by grace. For what will you do in the hour of death? This is inevitable, and may, for ought you know, be very near. If I could assure you of peace and wealth for the term of a long life, still without the peace of God, and an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, you must be miserable at the last, and lie down in sorrow.

But O that we may rather with one consent search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord from whom we have so greatly revolted. To us, indeed, belong shame and confusion of face, but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL'S, DEPTFORD,

ON SUNDAY, MAY 7, 1786.

ON THE LAMENTED OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

RICHARD CONYERS, L.L.D.

LATE RECTOR OF THAT PARISH.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. 1 THESS. ii. 8.

AN active undaunted zeal in the service of God, and a peculiar tenderness of affection towards his people, were happily and eminently combined in the character of St. Paul. The latter appears in none of his writings to greater advantage than in this Epistle, and particularly in this chapter. He had been made very useful to the Thessalonians, and was greatly beloved by them. Many of them had received the gospel which he preached, not in word only, but in power; and were effectually turned, by grace, from dead idols, to serve the living and the true God, 1 Thess. i. 5—9. They likewise were very dear to him; and being now at a distance from them, he writes to confirm their faith and hope, to animate and direct their conduct. And he takes many occasions of reminding them, of the peculiar regard he had borne them from the first, and how near they still were to his heart; that his love for them, which had sweetened all his labours and sufferings when he was among them, made him still solicitous for their welfare, and enabled him to rejoice on their account, while he was suffering bonds and imprisonment at Rome.

The verse I have read is one passage, out of many in the New Testament, where our translation does not fully come up to the spirit and beauty of the original. Not that it is unfaithful or faulty; it is chiefly owing to the difference of the languages. I believe we have no single word in the English tongue, to express the energy of the Greek term ἱμειρόμενοι, which he uses in the beginning of the verse; and therefore our translators have employed two, "Being affectionately desirous of you." It denotes a desire connected with the finest and most tender feelings of the heart; not like the degrading selfish desire of the miser for gold; but such an emotion (according to his own beautiful illustration in the preceding verse) as that with which the nurse, the mother while a nurse, contemplates her own child. Being thus disposed towards you, "we were willing"—but the Greek εὐδοκοῦμεν is more emphatical. We esteemed it our pleasure, our joy, the very height of our wishes, "to impart unto you the gospel of God," to put you into our own place, to communicate to you, by the gospel, all that comfort and strength, and joyful hope, which we have received from it ourselves. Yea, further, to have imparted to you our own souls also; that is, to devote our whole strength, time, and study, to this very end, to spend and be spent for you, and to be ready to seal our testimony with our blood, if this were needful to your establishment, "because ye are dear" (ἀγαπητοὶ), exceedingly dear unto us. The same word is used (for the language of mortals will not afford a stronger), Matth. iii. 17. "This is my beloved Son."

When I thought of preaching to you this

day, and of mingling my tears with yours, the occasion suggested the choice I have made of a text; and the countenances of many of you convince me that I have not made an improper choice. Another congregation might have been led, from what I have already said, to sympathize with the Thessalonians, in what they must have felt when they were deprived of such a minister and friend; but your minds are engaged by a sense of your own loss. You have reason. You acknowledge and feel, that if I wished (as I certainly did) to select a text which might, while you heard it, strongly impress your minds with the idea of my dear friend, your late pastor, and recal to your remembrance, his principles, actions, motives, and aims, how he spoke, and how he lived among you, I could hardly have found a passage in the whole scripture more directly suited to my purpose. I believe no minister in the present age, nor perhaps in any past age, since the apostle's days, could have a better warrant than Dr. Conyers, to adopt these words of St. Paul as expressive of his own spirit and character. He had a very tender affection for you: it was his earnest desire, and his great delight, to impart unto you the gospel of God, because you were dear to him: and it may be said of him with peculiar propriety, that in this service of love, he imparted to you his own soul, or life also. You have not forgotten, surely you never can forget, the very solemn and affecting manner in which his ministry among you closed. Whether, while he was reading the apostle's farewell discourse to the elders of the church of Ephesus (Acts xx. 18—35), which occurred in the second lesson for the day, he had a presage that you would see his face no more, we know not. Had he been certain of it, he could not have taken your consciences more earnestly to witness, that he was clear of your blood, and that he had not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. However, the event proved, that you then saw and heard him for the last time. His strength and life were prolonged to finish his discourse, and to pronounce over you his parting blessing, which he had scarcely finished, before he was called home to his Master's joy. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing," Luke xii. 43.

In considering the grounds of the apostle's love to the Thessalonians, and the proofs which he gave of it, the subject will frequently lead me to bear a testimony to the grace of God, vouchsafed to your late minister, of whom we may truly say, he was a follower of St Paul, as Paul also was of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1.

I. The first ground, the original cause of the apostle's love to the brethren, was the love of Christ His unwearied endeavours, in the midst of the hardships and dangers which awaited him in every place, to promote the happiness of mankind, made him appear to many who were unacquainted with the motives of his conduct, as though he were beside himself. The apology he offered was, the love of Christ constraineth us, 2 Cor. v. 14. Till he knew the Lord, he acted very differently. While he was under the power of prejudice and ignorance, he verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts ix. 1; xxvi. 9), and therefore breathed out threatenings and slaughter against his people. But Jesus whom he persecuted appeared to him in his way to Damascus, convinced him of his sin, vouchsafed him pardon, and commissioned him to preach the faith which he had laboured to destroy, Gal. i. 23. From that time he esteemed himself a chief sinner (1 Tim. i. 15, 16), and because much had been forgiven him, he loved much. He devoted his whole future life to proclaim the glory and grace of his Saviour, and to propose himself as a pattern of his long-suffering and mercy to all around him, that they likewise might believe and be saved. He was conscious of his Saviour's just right to reign in every heart. And they who, by receiving the gospel which he preached, entered into his views, and loved the Lord whom he loved, instantly became dear to him for his Lord's sake, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, bond or free. It is probable, that all who are convinced and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, having a clearer knowledge of the nature, number, and aggravation of their own sins, than they can possibly have of those of any other person, account themselves among the chief of sinners, though many of them may have been preserved from gross enormities. I never heard that your minister was influenced, like Saul of Tarsus, by a bitter persecuting spirit; and I believe his behaviour was moral and exemplary from his youth. When he entered upon his ministry at his beloved Helmsley, in Yorkshire, he found the place ignorant and dissolute to a proverb. At this early period of life, he feared God, and he hated wickedness. With much zeal and diligence he attempted the reformation of his parish, which was of great extent, and divided into several hamlets. He preached frequently in them all. He encouraged his parishioners to come to his house. He distributed them into little companies, that he might instruct them with more convenience: he met them in rotation by appointment. In this manner, long before he fully understood that gospel of God which of late years he so successfully imparted to you, I have been assured that he often preached or exhorted publicly, or more privately, twenty times in a week. These labours were not in vain: a great, visible, and almost universal reformation took place. About the time I am speaking

of, a clergyman in his neighbourhood made very honourable mention of Dr. Conyers, in a letter to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (which I have seen in print), as perhaps the most exemplary, indefatigable, and successful parochial minister in the kingdom; yet in the midst of applause and apparent success, he was far from being satisfied with himself. He did what he could: he did more than most others; but he felt there was something still wanting, though for a time he knew not what; but he was desirous to know: he studied the scriptures, and he prayed to the Father of lights. They who thus seek shall surely find. Important consequences often follow from a sudden involuntary turn of thought. One day an expression of St Paul's, "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephes. iii. 8), engaged his attention. He had often read the passage, but never noticed the word *unsearchable* before. The gospel, in his view of it, had appeared plain, and within his comprehension; but the apostle spoke of it as containing something that was unsearchable. A conclusion therefore forced itself upon him, that the idea he had hitherto affixed to the word *gospel*, could not be the same with that of the apostle. From this beginning he was soon led to perceive, that his whole scheme was essentially defective, that his people, however outwardly reformed, were not converted. —He now felt himself a sinner, and felt his need of faith in a Saviour, in a manner he had never done before. Thus he was brought with the apostle, to account his former gain but loss: the unsearchable riches of Christ opened to his mind, he received power to believe, his perplexities were removed, and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He presently told his people, with that amiable simplicity which so strongly marked his character, that though he had endeavoured to shew them the way of salvation, he had misled them; that what both he and they had been building was not upon the right foundation. He from that time preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2. i. 30), as the only ground of hope for sinners, and the only source from whence they could derive wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The Lord so blessed his word, that the greater part of the people who were most attached to him soon adopted his views, and many more were successively added to them. This change in his sentiments and manner of preaching, though it added efficacy to his moral instructions, and endeared him to his people at home, lost him much of that high estimation in which he had been held abroad. But he knew the gospel of God too well to be ashamed of it: whatever disgrace he suffered in such a cause, he could bear with patience. He loved his people and was beloved by them; and their advance in comfort and holiness made him ample compensation for the unkindness of those who knew not what they did. And thus, when the providence of God removed him hither, the constraining love of Christ, which had long been the great principle of his conduct, disposed him to love you before he saw you; and he came among you with an earnest desire to impart unto you the gospel of God, and his own soul also, because from the moment that he accepted the charge over you, he was affectionately desirous of you.

The regard of the apostle to the Thessalonians was undoubtedly heightened in proportion as the Lord was pleased to give him seals to his ministry among them. And the like cause had the like effect here. The mutual affection that subsists between a faithful minister and those to whom the Lord makes him useful, is of a peculiar kind, and not easily described I trust he looked upon many of you with joy as his crown and glory in the day of Christ (1 Thess. ii. 19); and you, I doubt not, looked on him with respect and gratitude, as the instrument of God in saving your souls, in calling you out of darkness into marvellous light. What were some of you doing, and whither were you going, when God sent you, by him, the word of salvation? And what a happy change have you since experienced? You were then dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, and therefore without hope, and without God in the world, Ephes. ii. 1, 12, 13. But now you, who were some time afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Now being freed from the slavery of sin, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, Rom. vi. 22. You have now access to God, communion with him, an interest in his promises, and a good hope through grace that though your minister be taken from you, he who by him began a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6. Let this thought moderate your grief. You will see the face of your minister no more here; but you will meet him again, ere long before the throne of God and the Lamb. Then all tears will be for ever wiped away.

Again, during the apostle's continuance with the Thessalonians, he and they had enjoyed precious seasons of worship together, and of mutual communion with God, in the ordinances of his appointment. Wherever two or three are met in the Lord's name (Matth. xviii. 20), he is mindful of his promise, and does manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world (John xiv. 22); and these tastes of his loving-kindness wonderfully soften, spiritualize, and enlarge their affections, and knit them closer and closer together in love. And though that power and unction from on high, which makes the ordinances of the gospel truly delightful, and an hour so employed preferable to a thousand of the world's hours (Psal. lxxxiv. 10), does not altogether depend

upon the gifts, or even upon the grace of the minister, yet it is doubtless a singular and high privilege, to be under the care of a wise and tender shepherd, of one who in the school of experience has acquired the tongue of the learned (Isa. l. 4), who knows how to adapt himself to the occasions of the people, to give every one their proper portion, to obviate their doubts, relieve their fears, point out their dangers, and to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Be thankful that you were long favoured with such an able minister of the New Testament. As a public preacher, he may perhaps have left some equals behind him. But he had at Deptford, as formerly at Helmsley, stated seasons, when he expounded the scriptures to a smaller auditory in his house, or within his own premises. He supposed that on these occasions few persons were present but those who either possessed the peace of the gospel, or were sincerely seeking it. The simplicity and meekness of wisdom with which, as a father among his children, he exhorted, comforted, and instructed these his more select hearers, seemed peculiar to himself. In this branch of his ministerial office I always thought him unequalled and inimitable. How often have many of you had reason to say, at such seasons, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. And the great attention with which he was heard, and the proofs he saw that his labours were not in vain, rendered him still more affectionately desirous towards you.

For, lastly, as one great reason why the apostle loved the Thessalonians was, that they were not only hearers, but doers of the word, and he could speak of them with pleasure, and propose them to others as examples of the efficacy and tendency of the gospel which he preached (1 Thess. i. 8, 9); so I trust, yea I know, that some of you were exceedingly dear to your late minister on this account also. He could say of you and to you, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord," 1 Thess. iii. 8. He had no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth (3 John 4), and demonstrate by their conduct, that the gospel which they professed was a doctrine according to godliness. Those of you who gave him this pleasure, may, now he is gone, praise God for the grace which enabled you to administer to the comfort of one who so tenderly watched over your souls. He was proportionably affected with pungent grief, when any whom he loved acted unsuitably to their profession, though they, perhaps, seldom knew what their unfaithfulness cost him. In his preaching he bore a strenuous and faithful testimony against every evil, not only against gross sins, but against every deviation, whether in temper or practice, from the spirit and rule of the gospel. But there was something in his natural disposition which made it difficult for him to expostulate plainly and strongly in private.—In private, he could not easily reprove. But he could mourn, he could wear out the day without pleasure, and the night without rest, in bemoaning those who had neither compassion for him nor for themselves. I can affirm this of him, from instances which have come to my own knowledge. Perhaps some person present may think, Surely the preacher has heard of me, and means to point me out to the notice of the congregation. No; it is your own conscience points you out, I know you not. But is it so, indeed, that you broke your minister's rest, and added to his troubles by your miscarriages? You do well to weep: may God give you repentance not to be repented of! 2 Cor. vii. 10. Will not his lamented and sudden death recal to your remembrance how earnestly he warned you, and pleaded with you, while he was living, and rouse you from that dangerous security into which you have been seduced by the deceitfulness of sin?

II. I have, in a great measure, anticipated what I purposed to mention under a second head—the proofs which he gave, that the affection he professed for his people was cordial and sincere. But the subject is not exhausted: 8t. Paul evidenced his love to the Thessalonians by imparting to them the gospel of God, and by his unwearied zeal and diligence in their service, in defiance of the difficulties and obstacles which always attended his labours. By the strong expression, that he was ready to impart unto them his own soul also, he intimates both the energy of his address, and his fixed determination to venture every consequence in their service.

In another place, the apostle, speaking of the doctrine which he preached, says, "according to my gospel," Rom. ii. 16. It was not a point of speculation with him. he possessed it. He had experienced the power of it; it was the spring of his conduct, the source of his comfort, and was therefore properly his own. Here he styles it the "gospel of God," perhaps to distinguish it from a pretended gospel, such as the Galatians received from false teachers, which he calls "another gospel" (Gal. i. 6, 7), and which was indeed not the gospel. The true gospel is of God. It is the glorious gospel of the blessed God, 1 Tim. i. 11. From whence we infer its certainty, authority, and importance. It is worthy of all acceptation: it is able to make us wise unto salvation, if cordially embraced (2 Tim. iii. 15); and to neglect it, is to refuse life, to choose death, to resolve to be miserable, and to affront the wisdom and goodness of God. When Paul preached this gospel at Thessalonica, it awakened the spirit of envy, opposition, and clamour, in many who believed not; but they who received it, experienced it

to be the power of God, to the salvation of their souls.

This gospel your late minister preached among you, and, I trust, effectually imparted to many of you, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. He owed all his success, and you derive all the light and comfort you obtained under his instruction, to the doctrine which he delivered. It cannot with reason be expected, that God will afford the seal of his blessing to any scheme of doctrine but his own truth. A preacher may be of a good character in civil life, and diligent in his office, and he may have some success in suppressing outward wickedness, though he does not preach the gospel of God, but he will not reach the heart of his people, wean them from their secret sins, and win them to the love and practice of universal holiness, unless he preaches St. Paul's gospel. I hope this congregation has been better taught, than to receive every thing indiscriminately for truth because it is spoken from a pulpit. You have the scriptures in your hands, and by this standard you are warranted, yea, commanded, to try the spirits (1 John iv. 1), because many false prophets and pretended teachers are abroad in the world. however, I will take the liberty to remind you of some plain and sure marks by which you will be able to distinguish a faithful minister of the true gospel.

He will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and propose him as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the only object of faith, the way, the truth, and the life. He will endeavour to convince you of your need of mercy, and then direct your thoughts to the atonement which Christ made for sin, by his bloody death upon the cross. He will give you no encouragement to think you can do any thing well pleasing to God till you yourselves are first made acceptable in the beloved; nor until his love is the motive of your obedience, and your dependence is fixed upon the promised communications of strength and grace from his fulness.

By a manifestation of the truth, he will commend himself to your consciences in the sight of God, 2 Cor. iv. 2. He will not amuse you with the discussion of some curious point, in which you have little immediate interest, or some cold general common-place subject. Many sermons, ingenious in their kind, may be compared to a letter put into the post-office without a direction. It is addressed to no body, it is owned by no body; and if a hundred people were to read it, not one of them would think himself concerned in the contents. But the word of the gospel, when faithfully dispensed, searches the heart (Heb. iv. 12), and tries the reins. You will wonder that the preacher, who perhaps is a stranger to you, can so exactly suit himself to your case. He will sometimes bring to your remembrance what you have done or said, or even what you have only thought, and which, possibly, you had forgotten. So that if you are going on in your sins, or are vailed under a cloak of hypocrisy, you will be ready to start, and think he is about to expose you publicly. Or if you are a mourner in Zion, distressed with fear and temptation, beset with trouble, and know not which way to turn, that tongue of the learned, which he has acquired in the school of experience, will frequently lead him, while speaking from his own feelings, to meet you with a word in season, so exactly suited to your case, that if you had told him the state of your mind, and every particular of your situation beforehand, he could not have described them better. Such is the correspondence between the word of God and the heart of man; and such is the similarity of the workings of the human heart in similar circumstances, that the preacher who is enlightened by the scripture, and by the Holy Spirit, while he does little more than relate the exercises of his own mind, appears to many of his hearers to express their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, better than they could have expressed them to him. Thus it is that the secrets of the heart are made manifest (1 Cor. xiv. 25), by the preaching of the gospel. All other preaching, compared with this, is lifeless, distant, and unaffecting, little more than declamation; but the words of a scribe (Matth. xiii. 52), well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God, come home to our own business and bosoms, and constrain many to say, with the woman of Samaria, "Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did," John iv. 29.

A true servant of God in the gospel may likewise be known, at least in the place where he resides, or statedly labours, by a certain mixed kind of character, which he will receive from public report. The general tenor of his conduct will be such, that the feeble attempts of slander to vilify him, will be gradually suppressed, and they who would speak evil of him, be put to shame and to silence, by his good conversation in Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 16. But though his behaviour be unimpeachable and exemplary, his principles will be misunderstood and misrepresented; and by different persons (sometimes by the same persons), very different and inconsistent things will be laid to his charge. He will often be deemed rigid, precise, uncharitable, enjoining a strictness in life and manners to the extreme; so that, to adopt his views, and to follow his rules, a person must bid farewell to comfort, and almost renounce society; while in the same day, and almost in the same breath, he will be represented as preaching doctrines which, if generally received, would be unfavourable to good morals, and promote licentiousness. For the natural heart has a dislike equally to the grace and to the holiness of the gospel. Salvation by faith in the blood

of Jesus is thought too easy, and affording too much encouragement to the unworthy; and the simple grateful obedience which characterizes those who seek salvation in this way, and in no other, is thought too strict and scrupulous, and carrying of things a great deal too far. They who are of the world, who speak to the world, and whom the world is willing to hear, give no offence, and therefore no clamour is excited against them; but a faithful minister will not be exposed to the woe (Luke vi. 26), denounced against those of whom all men speak favourably. His infirmities and mistakes (for he is not perfect) will be eagerly noticed and exaggerated; and if no just fault can be found, he must at least expect to be spoken of as an enthusiast, or branded by some name to which ignorance and prejudice have affixed a contumelious sense.

Such a one was your late minister. Like the apostle, he laboured to impart to his hearers the gospel of God: like him, he was unmoved by the opposition of those who knew not what they did, and ready to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they might be saved, 2 Tim. ii. 10. He loved you, and was willing to impart to you his own soul also. His spirit was willing; he did much, and wished he could have done more.

It was indeed a surprise to many who were not intimately acquainted with him, that he did no more. And it may be thought by some persons, that as, by his countenance, he seemed to enjoy a tolerable share of health, his public services were hardly answerable to the zeal of a man who was ready to pour out his very life for the good of souls. He preached but once a-week in his parish church; and no arguments, persuasions, or entreaties, could prevail on him to enter any pulpit but his own. Even when he has been expressly nominated by his diocesan to preach in another church, he has declined the service, and disappointed crowded auditories who wished to hear him. The benefits of his singular abilities were therefore confined to his own congregations. And it was with the greatest difficulty, and but seldom, that his most intimate friends could engage him to lead in family-worship, where he has been occasionally present. I have frequently mentioned to him my concern that the sphere of his usefulness should be so much limited; and he lamented it himself, but his hindrance was constitutional and invincible. He had a continued hurry and flutter upon his spirits, the effects of which were unaccountable to those who knew not the cause. Taken in different views, he might be considered as very happy or very uncomfortable at the same instant. In the most important sense, he was a happy man. He had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoyed much of the light of his countenance, and had no perplexing doubts respecting either his acceptance in the Beloved, or his perseverance in grace. Yet, through the agitation of his spirits, he spent his days, and almost every hour, in trepidation and alarm. The slig test incidents were sufficient to fill him with fears, which, though he knew to be groundless, he could not overcome. But upon no occasions did he suffer more from these painful feelings, than when he had public preaching in prospect. When he met his people at home, he usually found pleasure and liberty, unless he observed some new faces. But the sight of a stranger, especially if he knew or suspected him to be a minister, would sometimes distress him greatly, and almost disable him from speaking. It may seem very extraordinary, that a man of the first abilities as a preacher, highly respected, and honoured with eminent usefulness, should be intimidated by the presence of those who were much his inferiors. But such was his burden, which neither reflection nor resolution could remove. What he often suffered before he ascended this pulpit, and when he looked round upon a large congregation, and knew not how many such persons as he was afraid of might be among them, gave him a right to say, in a singular sense, that in imparting the gospel of God to you, he imparted his own soul also. Perhaps there have been martyrs, who approached the rack or the stake with less distressing sensations, than he has frequently felt when about to enter upon his otherwise delightful work. Yet, because you were the people of his immediate charge, and dear to him, he seldom declined your service on the forenoon of the Lord's day, if he was well. But this, I believe, was the reason, that at other times, instead of preaching in the church, he confined himself to a place where few, comparatively, could attend him. I do not know, that while he lived at Deptford, he ever preached publicly in this neighbourhood, excepting once, when he accepted an appointment to preach at the archdeacon's Visitation at Dartford. But he kept his intention a secret in his own breast; and did not mention it to his nearest friends; lest a multitude should be drawn to hear him. And he told me himself, that from the hour he stood engaged, which was several weeks before the time, he could scarcely think of any thing else; and that when the day arrived, his spirits were so greatly agitated, that for some minutes after he was in the pulpit, he was deprived of his eye-sight. But the Lord whom he served, supported him; and he was, upon the whole, carried comfortably through the service.

If we speak of death as the moment of separation between soul and body, he was not afraid of it; for he knew whom he believed; and that to depart and be with his Lord, was (πολλῳ μαλλον κρεισσον) unspeakably preferable to any thing that could be enjoyed in the present life, Phil. i. 23. But though not afraid

of death, he was often afraid of dying. His apprehensions of the possible forerunners and concomitants of a dying hour, frequently made a painful impression upon his spirits. Upon this account, they who loved him, have reason to be reconciled to the suddenness of his removal. His was an honourable dismission indeed! The messenger that called him home, found him actually and actively employed in his Master's service, with his loins girded up, and his lamp burning, Luke xii. 35. It was likewise a gracious condescension to his infirmity, and saved him from an experience of any of those conflicts, which he could seldom think of without anxiety and a degree of anguish.

Upon the whole, I may say of Dr. Conyers, without just fear of contradiction, he was a burning and a shining light, John v. 35. Many of you rejoiced in his light; and now, the man who cared for your souls, who was the minister of God to you for good, is taken from you, your sorrow is proportionable. Yet, if you truly entered into his views, you are not destitute. The Saviour whom he preached, and in whom ye have believed, is still with you. The stream at which you have often drank, and found refreshment, is dried up; but the fountain of living waters, from whence it was derived, is always full, and always flowing. Whoever dies, Jesus lives; the residue of the Spirit is with him, and he is at no loss for means to communicate his blessings to those who wait upon him: yea, under his management, even losses prove gains, and apparent hindrances work to the help and furtherance of faith. Be thankful that you were so long favoured with such a minister; and rejoice that though you can see him no more in this world, you shall meet him again in the world of light. In the meantime (need I say) respect and honour his memory; and the most effectual manner by which you can shew your regard to him, will be, by walking as he walked, and maintaining a conversation becoming the gospel (Phil. i. 27), which he so affectionately and faithfully imparted to you.

But there are, I fear, amongst you, those who acounted the joyful sound of the gospel, which he proclaimed, a burden, have been wearied by his earnest endeavours to pluck you as brands from the burning, and have often wished to be freed from his importunity. Now you have your wishes. Your faithful monitor is removed. He will alarm your consciences, he will offend your pride no more. But if, after slighting his labours of love while he lived, you remain likewise unaffected by his death, you are much more to be pitied than those who lament his removal. Alas! when numbers in different and distant places, who never saw you, are concerned for you, will you not yet be concerned for yourselves? Tremble, lest you should have cause to say, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!" Jer. viii. 20. You have had your opportunity, a day of grace, in which the things pertaining to your peace have been set before you. The Lord forbid that the following words should be applicable to you: "but now they are hidden from your eyes!" Luke xix. 42. The Saviour, whom you have too long slighted, is now once more preached to you. He is still upon a throne of grace, able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. But hereafter he will appear on a throne of judgment, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel, 2 Thess. i. 8

THE BEST WISDOM;

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1787,

THE DAY OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE POOR.

———*He that winneth souls is wise.* PROVERBS, xi. 30

ONLY he, who redeemed the soul by his blood, is able effectually to win it to himself. The work is his, and they who know him will render the praise to him alone. But in this respect, as in many others, there is an analogy between the natural and the moral world. In both, he displays his power and executes his purposes by an instituted course of means and instruments. In both, he often so conceals his operations under the vail of second causes, that to a common and inattentive eye, he seems to do nothing, when in reality he does all. The manna with which he fed Israel in the wilderness, though more immediately and visibly, was not more certainly the effect and proof of his providence and goodness, than the bread by which we live. It is he who giveth the earth virtue to produce corn (Psalm civ. 14); the discretion of the husbandman who prepareth the ground and soweth the seed is from him (Is. xxviii. 24—29): and the influence of the sun and the rain, so necessary to ripen the grain, and to clothe the fields with plenty in the season of harvest (Matth. v. 43), is the influence of him who worketh all in all. In this process, the blessing which secures the desired event, is wholly from the Lord, though the labour of man and the use of means are indispensable, because his appointment has made them so.

Thus in the great concern of winning souls, though God whose thoughts and ways are as far above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, may, sometimes, as in the instance of the apostle Paul (Acts ix. 6), affect and win the heart by an immediate and instantaneous exertion of his power; yet this is not his ordinary method. Though fallen, we are still rational creatures, and he is pleased to treat us as such. He proposes considerations and motives in his holy word, which though ineffectual, considered merely as means, and without the concurrence of his agency, yet have, in their own nature, a moral tendency and suitableness to awaken our attention, and to convince us of our sin and misery, and to recal us to our original state of dependence upon his goodness, and obedience to his will. For the proof of this, I may appeal to the consciences of many persons: the force of truth has compelled them to tremble, like Felix, and perhaps, like Herod, to do many things; and though their depravity has been too obstinate to yield to conviction, they have understood and felt enough, to leave them without excuse.

The Lord God usually employs those whom he has already won and subdued by his grace, as instruments of winning others; and there are none of his people, however weak their capacities, or however low their situations in life, but may hope for a share in this honour, if they are faithful to the light he has given them, and live according to the rule of his word.—But he has instituted the office of the gospel-ministry with a more especial view to this important service.

The proposition in the text is simple and plain; and the principal division of my subject is suggested by the appearance of our present assembly. I never had an opportunity before of preaching to so many of my

brethren in the ministry, and perhaps I never may again. And at my time of life, it becomes me, whenever I stand in the pulpit, to consider seriously, that it is, at least, possible, it may be the last time, and that you, to whom I am now about to speak, may see my face no more. Were I even sure of this, how could I more properly close my public services, than by aiming with my latest breath, to impress upon you, my friends and brethren, this weighty aphorism, "He that winneth souls is wise?" May it be written upon my own heart while I live! may it be written upon all our hearts! Let the scholar, the philosopher, the politician, settle their several claims to wisdom among themselves; but may this wisdom be ours. The man that winneth souls is truly and emphatically wise.

I shall, in the first place, point out the principal acknowledged characteristics of wisdom, and shew, that they are all exemplified in the spirit and conduct of the minister who is duly qualified for the service of winning souls. I do not say that all faithful ministers are influenced by this wisdom in the same degree; but unless it has an habitual and prevailing influence on the plans and practice of a public teacher, we need not wonder if he be neither faithful nor useful. My chief design is to elucidate and confirm this first point; but towards the close of my discourse, I shall, secondly, address myself to private christians, and remind you of your common interest with us in this concern, and the advantages and opportunities you have of shewing yourselves wise, by contributing your endeavours to promote the great design of winning souls.

I. The minister who winneth souls is wise.

1. Wisdom is discovered in the choice of a fit and valuable end. If a man has great talents and abilities, we do not account him wise, unless he employs them properly; a life whiled away in low and trivial pursuits, implies a want of wisdom. But he who aims at winning souls, proposes an end which well deserves his application, and will, so far as he succeeds, richly compensate him for all that he can do or suffer in so good a cause. The grand object of his life, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the recovery of souls. We often use the word *win*, in a sense which the Hebrew term suggests; as to win a battle or a fortress. The soul, in its fallen state, separated and alienated from God, is, by his righteous permission, under the power of Satan, who rules in it as a strong one armed in his own house or castle, Luke xi. 21; Eph. ii. 2. Were the effects of this bondage confined to the present life an attempt to free the soul from that misery, mischief, and madness, with which the world is filled, would be honourable and important. But God, who formed the soul originally for himself, has given it such a vast capacity, that nothing short of himself can satisfy its desires; and it is likewise, by his constitution, immortal. This capacity of being exquisitely happy or miserable, and that for ever, renders the soul so valuable in the judgment of its Creator, that he gave the Son of his love to redeem it from sin and misery, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. By this adorable method of adjusting the demands of his justice and the honour of his government, to the purposes of his mercy, his wisdom and glory are more eminently discovered to his intelligent creatures, than by all his other works. If the only wise God commends to us his gracious design of recovering souls from the dominion of Satan, and of winning them to himself, as the highest instance of his wisdom and goodness: then, certainly, he who proposes it as the great end of his life, that by serving God in the ministry, he may be an instrument o winning souls, is truly wise, so far as con cerns his leading aim and object.

2. Wisdom directs us likewise to a consideration and choice of means proper to the attainment of a proposed end. To attempt what is impracticable, however desirable it might be thought, upon a supposition that it could be accomplished, is a mark, not of wisdom, but of folly. A man, without being chargeable with rashness, may undertake to move a stone of several tons weight, and even to raise it, if needful, to the top of a tower, or to force open the strongest gate of a castle; but then the application of mechanical powers would be necessary. If he were unacquainted with these, or disdained to employ them; if, without estimating or considering the resistance to be overcome, and relying solely on his personal strength, he should attempt to move the enormous stone with his hands, or to burst the gates of brass and bars of iron asunder with his feet, his utmost efforts must issue in weariness and disappointment, and no one would think him wise. The experience of ages has demonstrated all endeavours to win souls, to free them from prejudice, to reclaim them from the love and practice of sin, by the mere force of human arguments and moral suasion, to be equally chimerical and unsuccessful. The heathen moralists laboured much in this way, but they laboured in vain. Some of them felt and acknowledged that human nature was depraved; but not knowing the root, nor the extent, nor the proper remedy of the disorders they wished to cure, their best sentiments, however specious in theory, made little more impression upon the hearts of their admirers, or even upon their own, than the falling snow makes upon a rock. If the ancient sages could do but little, the modern philosophers, as they chuse to be called, have done, if possible, still less. What a poet observed of the former, is, at least equally, applicable to the latter: *Virtus laudatur et alget.* Virtue is defined, described, recommended, and praised, but wickedness

and folly rapidly increase under their instructions; and while in their pompous declamations they propose liberty to others (1 Pet. ii. 19), they are themselves the servants, the slaves of corruption. The gospel of Christ, the glorious gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. i. 11), is the only effectual mean for reforming mankind. To the man who possesses, and knows the use of this grand, this wonderful machine, if I may be allowed the comparison, what is otherwise impracticable becomes easy. The gospel removes difficulties insuperable to human power. It causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear (Isa. xxxv. 8; Matth. xi. 5); it softens the heart of stone, and raises the dead in trespasses and sin to a life of righteousness. No force, but that of the gospel, is sufficient to remove the mountainous load of guilt from an awakened conscience, to calm the violence of tumultuous passions, to raise an earthly soul from grovelling in the mire of sensuality or avarice, to a spiritual and divine life, a life of communion with God. No system but the gospel can communicate motives, encouragements, and prospects, sufficient to withstand and counteract all the snares and temptations with which the spirit of this world, by its frowns or its smiles, will endeavour, either to intimidate or to bribe us from the path of duty. But the gospel, rightly understood and cordially embraced, will inspire the slothful with energy, and the fearful with courage. It will make the miser generous, melt the churl into kindness, tame the raging tiger in the breast, and in a word, expand the narrow selfish heart, and fill it with a spirit of love to God, cheerful unreserved obedience to his will and benevolence to mankind.

I shall not trespass upon your time, by delineating at large my idea of the gospel. Yet t may be proper to mention three points, which, in my judgment, are essential to it.

The first respects the character of Jesus the Saviour: That he is very God, and very man, God manifest in the flesh: that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: that this divine Word assumed our nature into a personal union with himself, lived and died in behalf of sinners, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, over all, God blessed for ever (1 Tim. iii. 16; John i. 1, 14): that he is the proper object of our worship, supreme love, trust, and adoration: that it is he on whom the eyes and expectation of sinners, sensible of their wants and miseries, are fixed, and out of whose fulness they all receive life, strength, comfort, and grace, to help in time of need, Ps. xxxiv. 5; John i. 16. This doctrine is the pillar and ground of truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. They who have a right sense of the guilt and power of sin, of the holiness and majesty of God, and of the hosts of enemies combined against their peace, must sink into despair, unless supported by the knowledge of an Almighty Omnipresent Saviour, who is always near, a very present help in trouble, and who can discern the thoughts of the heart (Rev. ii. 23); for often their most trying and dangerous exigencies are beyond the reach of a creature's eye. Whatever they thought of him before, when they know themselves, they cannot entrust their souls to the power, or care, or compassion of a creature; and therefore rejoice that they are warranted and encouraged to commend themselves to him, as to a faithful creator, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

The second grand peculiarity of the gospel is the doctrine of an atonement: That Christ in his state of humiliation, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, made a full, proper, and perfect satisfaction for sin (Phil. ii. 8); that is, his sufferings unto death, the torments which he endured in his body, and the agonies of his soul, inconceivable to us but by their effects (his bloody sweat in the garden, and his astonishing complaint upon the cross, that God had forsaken him), exhibited a striking and solemn proof to the world, to the universe, no less to angels than to men, that God, in affording mercy to sinners, still shews his inflexible displeasure against sin, and makes no relaxation in the awful demands of his holiness, justice, and truth. A substitution capable of manifesting the justice of God in the highest exercise of his mercy, that he might appear just in justifying the ungodly (Rom. iv. 5), was of such vast importance to the honour of God's character and government, that if it could have been effected by any inferior means, Christ died in vain, Galat. ii. 21. The interposition of a mere creature, even if voluntary, (but what creature would dare to draw upon himself the displeasure of God due to the sins of men?) could not have displayed the full-orbed glory of all the divine perfections, as it now shines forth in the person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. None in heaven or in earth were able or worthy to interpose. Therefore the Son said, "Lo I come!" He himself, his ownself, bore our sins in his own body upon the tree (1 Pet. ii. 24): he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21.

There is a third point, which is peculiar to the religion of the Bible, and which discriminates it from all religious systems of human institution. There are few of these but contain some important truths. In general, they inculcate a degree of attention to the practice of social virtues. But no other system ever proposed to all persons, and as a general truth, the necessity and certainty of supernatural influence and agency; an agency which, from the greatness of its effect, and the universality of its proposal (being promised to all without exception who desire it), must be divine. The bodies of believers are the temples of the Holy

Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19), that God dwelleth in them by his Spirit, that they have received the Spirit of God, that they are led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and have communion with the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 4; Galat. v. 18, 25; 1 Cor. xiij. 14); these truths are either expressed or strongly implied in almost every page of the New Testament.

The gospel then is a message from God. It stains the pride of human glory, and without regarding the petty distinctions which obtain amongst men with respect to character or rank, it treats them all as sinners in the sight of God, and under the power of depravity strengthened by habit. As such, it points them to a Saviour; it invites and enjoins them to apply to him, to submit to him, and to put their whole trust in him; to renounce all pleas of their own, and to plead his name and his atonement for their pardon and acceptance; and promises to all who thus plead, that the Holy Spirit of God will visit them, dwell in them, and abide with them, to enable them by his gracious influence, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

I omit other particulars, nor shall I at present attempt to prove these, farther than by an appeal to observation and experience. I trust, my brethren, we all desire to win souls. It is a good desire, it is a noble, a glorious ambition. I hope we are likewise apprised of the nature of the undertaking, and are too wise to attempt it, or to expect success, by any power or exertion of our own, unless we faithfully and humbly make use of the instrument which God has appointed for the purpose. This instrument is the gospel-message, the principal parts of which I have stated to you. This is the rod of God's strength, which, like the wonder-working rod of Moses, when held up in his name, though wielded by a feeble arm, can perform miracles. And I will venture to affirm, without hesitation, and without exception, that no man, whatever his abilities and qualifications may be in other respects, though he had the zeal of a martyr and the powers of an angel, will be able to force the strong-holds of Satan, to cast down the lofty imaginations of men, and win souls to holiness and happiness, without it. But if he be called and taught of God to preach this gospel, he will do great things; he will be honoured and successful: he will win souls; he will be numbered among the wise.

Let us appeal to facts. The apostle Paul was eminently successful in winning souls. He planted churches in many different and distant parts of the Roman empire. Wherever he went, power from on high accompanied his word, and made it effectual, according to the commission he had received from the Lord, to open the eyes of the blinded Heathens, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. Can we propose a better example for our imitation? Would we know the subject-matter of that preaching which produced such extensive and salutary effects? He gives us full information. He preached Christ crucified; Christ the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. i. 23, 24); the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephes. iii. 8); Christ the Man who shall judge the quick and dead (Acts xvii. 31; xxvi. 28); Christ as God, who purchased the church with his own blood. As a wise master-builder, he laid this foundation, and declared, that other foundation can no man lay, 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. He preached the atonement, that Christ made peace by the blood of his cross, died for us while sinners, and that we are justified by his blood, Col. i. 20. He preached the agency of the Holy Spirit as absolutely necessary and powerfully efficacious, and ascribes that operation by which Christ in his true character is revealed to the heart, to the same power which commanded light to shine out of darkness, in the beginning, 2 Cor. iv. 6. These truths were the weapons of his warfare, 2 Cor. x. 4. He went forth conquering and to conquer, not by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the spirit of demonstration and power.

I need not tell this auditory what were the doctrines which shook the pillars and foundations of Popery at the Reformation, and diffused a knowledge and practice becoming the profession of Christianity, among many nations which had been long involved in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and wickedness. In our own land, it was not very long before the principles of the Reformation were severely discountenanced. Particularly in the reign of Charles II., they were opposed by methods which the good providence of God at length effectually restrained, by favouring us with a succession of Princes of the House of Hanover. If the lives and conduct of those who endured fines, stripes, imprisonment, and death for conscience sake, be compared with the spirit and temper of those who inflicted or approved them, I think a candid and attentive inquirer will be at no loss to determine on which side the advantage lay, in point of real religion and sound morality.

The spirit of our present excellent constitution and government allows us a degree of religious liberty unknown to our forefathers, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; and the doctrines of the Reformation and of the apostles are still preached. Nor have we reason to fear that sanguinary laws, and the iron hand of arbitrary power, will be employed to silence us. Yet the doctrines themselves are far from being generally acceptable. The spirit of opposition is awake, and active as formerly, though the method of its attack is varied. But great is the truth, and will prevail. It has triumphed over violence and rage; it is equally superior to the arts of subtlety and refinement. We are not afraid to

repeat the apostle's challenge: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 John v. 5. Which is the scheme of religion in the present day, which produces the most conscientious reverence to the holy name of the Lord our God, the most habitual and devout observance of his holy day, and of family-worship? What kind of preaching evidences itself to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the most numerous and notorious instances of persons reclaimed by it from habits of gross licentiousness, and effectually taught to fear the Lord and depart from evil? What are those principles, which, by experience, are found most suitable and most powerful to support the soul under the pressure of great afflictions, or upon the near approach of death? I know there are people under afflictions, who, like Pharaoh, harden themselves yet more; who value themselves upon a proud stoical resolution, and deem it a weakness to complain. But christian fortitude is a very different thing. It is the temper of a humble pardoned sinner, who has entrusted himself and his all to the Saviour, and, believing that he condescends to direct all his concerns, submits to his appointments, not by constraint, but willingly, sensible that the wisdom and love of him in whom he confides will chuse better for him than he could possibly chuse for himself. I know, or have read, that the American Indians, when put to death by their enemies, in the midst of the most excruciating tortures that cruelty can invent, will sing their war-songs, and insult their tormentors, without uttering a groan or shedding a tear; and I have likewise read of philosophers, who, to confirm their admirers in a persuasion that infidelity had freed them from all fear of death or its consequences, have jested in their dying hours. What a contrast to these is the relation we have of the death of Stephen, who, with the utmost composure, committed his departing spirit into the hands of his Saviour, whom he saw ready to receive him, and employed his latest breath in prayer for his murderers! Acts vii. 55—60. When a believer in Jesus is about to die, he does not express the fiend-like phrenzy of a savage, or the ill-timed levity of a buffoon; he is serious and recollected. Conscious of his unworthiness, but knowing whom he has believed, he rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. There is often a dignity and energy in the language of plain people in dying circumstances, far superior to what might be expected from their former habits of life: they seem to have new ideas and new faculties; heaven opened to them, and opened in them, while yet in the body. Ignorant and profane persons, who are sometimes spectators of such scenes, have been astonished at effects which, though they could not account for, have for the moment secretly extorted from them the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," Numb. xxiii. 10. By these effects on the lives and deaths of those who cordially receive it, the gospel which we preach, the doctrine of the cross, approves itself to be the power of God unto salvation, the sure and only mean of winning souls to his favour and image.

If I have taken up too much of your time with this second particular, let the importance of it, and the state of religion amongst us, plead my excuse. Thus far we have advanced—If it be wisdom to aim at a great design, and to adopt the most fit and proper means for the accomplishment, the man my text speaks of is wise. His end is great, to win souls. The mean he employs is the gospel, which God has revealed and instituted for this very purpose, and with which his power and blessing are surely connected by promise.

3. Yet the knowledge of a worthy end, and of the means by which it may be attained, is not sufficient to denominate a man wise. If he be truly wise, and his object of great importance, he will not suffer himself to be easily diverted from it, but will rather hold and manage every inferior concernment in a due subservience and subordination to his main point. Sir Isaac Newton, when a child, might possibly have amused himself, as many other children have done, by blowing up bubbles in soapy water with a pipe. But it was not a childish amusement in the hands of this sublime genius, when he applied it, among other experiments, to discover and establish that theory of light and colours, by which, in his admirable System of Optics, he enlightened the world. But if we speak strictly, the most important employments and discoveries of which mankind are capable, if directed no higher than to the concerns of the present life, are trivial and worthless as the sports of children, or the wretched amusements of lunatics, to an immortal, who is soon, very soon, to pass unto the unseen world, to appear before the judgment-seat of God, and to be fixed, according to his righteous award, in a state of endless happiness or misery. The desire of pleasing God, and of doing all to his glory, which should be the ultimate end of a rational creature, and will be, if he feels his dependence and his obligations, this, like the fabled philosopher's stone, turns every thing into gold, sanctifies the most common actions of life which belong to the situation in which Divine Providence has placed us, and gives them a sublimity and dignity. Consecrated by this intention, they become acts of devotion. They have a very low idea of religion who confine it to what we usually mean by devotional exercises. The truly religious man does indeed bow his knees in secret before the Most High God, he carefully consults his holy word, he waits upon him in his public ordinances. In these ways he derives fresh supplies from

the fountain of wisdom and grace, and his strength is renewed. But he does not leave his religion in the closet or the church; it abideth in him, is the governing spring of his whole conduct, and according to the degree of his attainment in faith and love, and allowing for the unavoidable abstractions incidental to our frames (which are too weak and limited to be able to fix our attention closely upon many things at once), whether he be upon the throne or the bench, upon the parade or the exchange; whether he be called to serve God in a public capacity, or in private life, whether he be in a state of affluence, or earns his honest bread by sweeping the streets—in every station and situation, he is a servant of God, from morning to night; and these very different services are all equally acceptable to him, who seeth not as man seeth, and estimates them, not by their comparative importance in our view, but according to the principle of love by which they are performed, and the sublime end to which they are directed.

But we, my brethren, who are ministers of the gospel, have this great advantage (if indeed we improve it), that our particular calling as members of society, coincides with our general calling as christians. The person who serves God in a secular calling, may, as I have observed, be equally acceptable to God, because equally devoted to his will; but his advantages and opportunities for winning souls are not equal to ours. It is our professed and appropriate business; and we are freed from the incumbrances of worldly business, that we may give our whole attention to this very thing, Acts vi. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. If we are wise, we shall watch and pray against being impeded by any studies and pursuits which have not an evident tendency to promote our success in winning souls. You have probably heard what is related of the address of whale-fishers, when the whale, irritated by the wounds he has received, attacks their boats. It is said they have a tub in readiness to throw into the sea, and that while the whale furiously encounters the tub, the boat has time to escape. Whether this be fact or not, methinks it may suggest a useful lesson to us: Many things, not criminal in themselves, will prove so to us, if we suffer them, by engrossing too much of our time and thoughts, to divert us from our principal object. It may not be wrong, it may be commendable, for a minister to possess some general knowledge of philosophy, history, criticism, and other branches of literature, or of the controversies which have disturbed the peace of the Church. But *perimus in licitis.* An over-attachment to these studies, though less scandalous, may prove little less hurtful to our ministry than the love of pleasure, or the love of money. He who is duly sensible of the importance and difficulty of winning souls, will find but little leisure for sorting shells or butterflies, for studying grammatical niceties, for poring over manuscripts scarcely legible, for decyphering ancient inscriptions, or entangling himself in the dry uninteresting thickets of controversy. He will be careful lest avocations of this kind should prove like the tubs I have mentioned, amusements to divert his attention from the state of souls around him, who are in danger of perishing in ignorance and sin. We are set as watchmen to sound the alarm, to warn the wicked of their evil ways, to direct inquirers into the paths of peace, to point out the snares and temptations to which they are exposed, to exhort and charge those who profess the truth, that they walk worthy of God who has called them to his kingdom and glory; in a word, to use our best endeavours publicly, and from house to house (Acts xx. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 2), in season and out of season, to build up our hearers in their most holy faith. We are to give an account of the talents, opportunities, and souls entrusted to us, and we should tremble at the thought of being then obliged to confess, "while thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone," 1 Kings xx. 40. If such an eminent servant of God as archbishop Usher, though possessed of the faith and hope of the gospel, found cause, when reviewing his past life on his dying bed, to cry out repeatedly and earnestly, "Lord, forgive my sins of omission!" how jealous ought we to be of ourselves! It behoves us to use the language of Nehemiah, to many proposals and pursuits which our inclinations may plead for, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" Neh. vi. 3. Seldom is any man remarkably successful and eminent in arts or sciences, in the acquisition of wealth or power, who does not resolutely deny himself in other respects, and make every secondary point give place, so far as it stands in competition with his leading and favourite object. Such a determined resolution, to follow the avowed design of our calling as the one thing, in comparison with which every thing else is to be undervalued and neglected, if likely to hinder us, is essential to that wisdom which alone can qualify us for winning souls.

4. This wisdom implies fortitude also. If we engage in this work without counting the cost, and without being apprised of the difficulties and snares to which it may expose us; or if we cannot, in some measure, say with the apostle, None of these things move me (Acts xx. 23), we shall probably be soon discouraged. What should we think of a statesman, who, having formed a wise and noble plan for the benefit of a kingdom, and having the means necessary to accomplish it within his power, should be deterred from carrying it into execution, though it was approved by all competent judges, merely because he could

not bear to be misunderstood, or misrepresented, by the very lowest of the people, or by the children who play in the street? His want of spirit, upon such a supposition, would doubtless be esteemed a want of wisdom. But this is a faint representation of our folly, if, believing ourselves to be the servants of God, being convinced, as we say, of the worth and danger of souls, and knowing that the gospel of God, committed to our trust (1 Thess. ii. 4), is the only possible mean of their recovery; a regard to the fear or favour of men should prevail on us to suppress or soften our message, and to accommodate ourselves to their taste, instead of conforming to our instructions, lest we should displease them. Would an earthly king bear with an ambassador who was guilty of such timid treachery? We cannot, my brethren, think too humbly of ourselves, but we may magnify our office, and we ought. In this sense at least, we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. v. 20), that the message we are to deliver, is not ours, but his by whom we are sent. We are not answerable for the success, but we are under the strongest obligation to be faithful. And he whose we are, and whom we serve, is well able to support us. Let us not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their revilings, Isa. li. 7. In the sight of our Lord God, all the nations of the earth collected are less than nothing, and vanity inconsiderable as the drop which falls unperceived from the bucket, or the dust (Isa. xl. 15) which cleaves to the scales without affecting the balance. The apostles were wise to win souls. They tried the spirit of the world before us, and were despised and insulted by it. They were accounted the offscouring and filth of all things, and suffered much shame for their Lord's sake (1 Cor. iv. 18; Acts v. 41); but they esteemed shame, in such a cause, their highest honour. Jesus endured the cross, and despised the shame for them and for us. He was buffeted, spit on, treated as a madman, a demoniac, and laughed to scorn. Let us go forth bearing his reproach, in meekness of wisdom; instructing those who oppose, not rendering railing for railing, but pitying and praying for them: but let us be firm and unmoved, and not besitate to speak the truth in love, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. We shall not speak wholly in vain; and to be instrumental in saving one soul from death, is an honour sufficient to compensate for all the slights and contempt we can meet with from an unkind world. It is, indeed, our duty to study to find out acceptable words, to endeavour to please men for their edification, and to be careful not to add to the unavoidable offence of the gospel, by debasing our zeal with the unhallowed fire of an angry spirit: but we degrade our character, if we appear too solicitous to conciliate the good opinion of men, or to depend upon their favour. The Lord, who employs us, will take care of us; and to live in a spirit of unreserved dependence upon him, will raise us to a noble independence with respect to creatures. All hearts are in his hands. He will protect our persons and characters, supply our wants, controul our enemies, and raise us friends, so far as he sees it needful, without any solicitude on our parts, if we can but put our trust in him. Such are the principles of Christian fortitude. He who is wise to win souls, loves his fellow-creatures, but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord. He will neither provoke nor dread their frowns, nor will he meanly court their smiles. He knows that if they receive his message, they will love him for the truth's sake, and he neither expects nor desires their favour upon other terms. By the cross of Christ he is crucified to the world (Gal. iv. 14), and the world to him. He has chosen his side. He will serve the Lord (Joshua xxiv. 25), and he will use his utmost influence to prevail on others to serve him likewise; so far as he succeeds, he feels a joy superior to the joy of harvest, or of those who divide the spoil, Isa. ix. 3. When he cannot succeed, he is grieved, but not disconcerted; and, for the most part his calm but stedfast perseverance in well-doing, will gradually establish his character, stop the mouth of calumny, and extort a reverence to his person, even from those who cannot bear his doctrine.

5. I shall mention but one particular more, which, though experience shews to be not so absolutely necessary as those which I have already specified, because, in fact, it has been too little regarded by many who have been wise to win souls, yet is certainly a branch of that wisdom, which, as ministers, we ought incessantly to ask of God—I mean a due attention to the importance of union among those who are engaged in the same cause. A great stress has indeed been often laid upon uniformity of sentiment and modes of worship; but this, in the present state of human nature, can no more be effected either by force or persuasion, than men can be forced or persuaded to a uniformity of stature or complexion; and if it were practicable, it might prove of little value. The form of religion may be strenuously contended for by those who are strangers to the power of it; but the best form we can conceive, if destitute of power, is lifeless, like the body without the soul. The true unity of spirit is derived from the things in which those who are taught and born of God agree, and should not be affected by those in which they differ. The church of Christ, collectively considered, is an army; they serve under one Prince, have one common interest, and are opposed by the same enemies. This army is kept up, and the places of those who are daily removed to the church triumphant, supplied entirely by those who are rescued and won from the power of the ene-

my, which is chiefly effected by the gospel-ministry. This consideration should remind ministers, that it is highly improper (I might use a stronger expression) to waste much of their time and talents, which ought to be employed against the common foe, in opposing those, who, though they cannot exactly agree with them in every smaller point, are perfectly agreed, and ready to concur with them, in promoting their principal design. A wise statesman, who has a point much at heart which he cannot carry without assistance, will gladly accept of help from persons of all parties on whom he can prevail to join with him, and will not, at such a crisis, preclude himself from this advantage, by an unseasonable discussion of more minute concerns, in which he knows they must, and will be against him. When I see ministers of acknowledged piety, and respectable abilities, very busy in defending or confuting the smaller differences, which already too much separate those who ought to be of one heart and one mind, though, while they are all fallible, they cannot be exactly of one judgment; though I give them credit for their good intention, I cannot but lament the misapplication of their zeal, which, if directed into another channel, would probably make them much more successful in winning souls. Let us sound an alarm in the enemy's camp, but not in our own! I have somewhere met with a passage of ancient history, the substance of which, though my recollection of it is but imperfect, I will relate, because I think it very applicable to this part of my subject. It is an account of two large bodies of forces which fell in with each other in a dark night. A battle immediately ensued. The attack and resistance were supported with equal spirit. The contest was fierce and bloody. Great was the slaughter on both sides, and on both sides they were on the point of claiming the victory; when the day broke, and as the light advanced, they soon perceived to their astonishment and grief, that owing to the darkness of the night, they had been fighting, not with enemies, as they had supposed, but with friends and allies; they had been doing their enemies work, and weakening the cause they wished to support. The expectation of each party to conquer the other, was founded upon the losses the opponent had sustained; and this was what proportionably aggravated their lamentation and distress, when they had sufficient light to shew them the mischief they had done. Ah! my friends, if shame be compatible with the heavenly state, as perhaps in a sense it may (for believers, when most happy here, are most sensibly ashamed of themselves), shall we not, even then, be ashamed to think how often, in this dark world, we mistook our friends for foes, and that, while we thought we were fighting for the cause of God and truth, we were wounding and worrying the people whom he loved, and perhaps indulging our own narrow, selfish, party prejudices, under the semblance of zeal for his glory.

II. I hope what I have hitherto offered, though more directly addressed to ministers, may not be altogether uninteresting or unuseful to the rest of my auditory; but you who are not in the ministry, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have a desire, in common with us, to win souls. And there is not only ample room and scope for your endeavours, in concert with ours, but without concurrence on your parts, we can expect but little success. You, likewise, if animated by the wisdom which is from above, even those of you who are in the most confined situations, may be greatly instrumental in winning souls.

1. By your example.—If you walk agreeably to your profession, blameless and harmless as the children of God, shining as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. When we preach a free salvation by the blood of Jesus, they, who know no better, misrepresent our doctrine, as being unfavourable to the practice of morality, supposing that by the stress we lay upon faith in his atonement, as the only solid ground of hope for acceptance with God, we encourage men to expect to be saved at last, whether they obey his commandments or not. We endeavour to convince them of their mistake, and to prove, that as without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6), so it is no less impossible for any person to possess true faith, without earnestly endeavouring to please and obey him in all things, from principles of love and gratitude. The proof of this is easy to those who understand the scriptures, and acknowledge their divine authority. But many, yea, most people, are more likely to be convinced by what they observe of you, than by what they hear from us. We assure them that our gospel teaches those who receive it, to renounce all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Tit. ii. 12); to be temperate in prosperity, patient under affliction; to fill up their several relations in life with integrity and diligence; to be cheerfully submissive to the will of God under all changes; to be meek, gentle, and benevolent, forbearing and forgiving; in a word, to do, in all cases, to others, as we would they should do unto us, Matth. vii. 12. Happy for us, if when we look round upon our hearers, we can with confidence say, "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men," 2 Cor. iii. 2. If any ask us concerning the tendency of our doctrines, shall we send them to you, that they may notice, not only your serious and constant attendance upon public worship, but the good order of your families, your behaviour as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants, your punctuality in business, and to all your engagements and promises, and the tenderness you discover to the characters and concerns of your neigh

bours? Shall we send them to you, when you are in trouble, when you are visited with sickness and strong pain, or when the desire of your eyes is taken away with a stroke (Ezek. xxiv. 16), that they may see with their own eyes and be satisfied that you have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor contented yourselves with mere lifeless notions of the truth; but that your religion is real and powerful, and not only inspires you with a good hope respecting a future state, but is the source of your comfort, and the spring of your conduct in the present life? may we venture, my friends, to make this appeal? then undoubtedly you are wise to win souls. A profession like yours cannot be without an influence within your own circle. Do any persons, who know your whole deportment, affect to scorn or pity you? if they treat you as hypocrites, they are hypocrites themselves, they are contradicted by their own consciences. I will not say they love you, but be assured they secretly reverence you. It is only the trifling half-professor, who hears the gospel and talks about it, but dishonours it by his practice, whom the world really despise. And who can blame them for despising such characters? But, alas for those who, by thus causing the ways of truth to be evil spoken of, lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, Lev. xix. 14.

The effects of a consistent conversation becoming the gospel in those who profess it, were remarkably exemplified in the first Christian church at Jerusalem. They were apparently like sheep without a shepherd, sheep in the midst of wolves. They were surrounded by the very people who had lately murdered their Lord. But the holiness, love, joy, peace, union and simplicity, which animated their conduct, impressed an awe upon the beholders, so that no poor pretender durst presume to join them (Acts v. 13); and though divested of all outward advantages and support, the people were constrained to magnify them. Were this spirit more general amongst us, I believe it would be more effectual to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and to silence the cavils of infidels, than all our books and sermons. And the twelve apostles, were they now living amongst us, would probably preach to little purpose, unless a measure of this spirit were discoverable in their professed admirers.

2. By your prayers.—You are not called to preach the gospel, but in this way, you may greatly assist those who are. Brethren, pray for us. Our work is great; the difficulties we have to surmount, the snares and temptations which surround us, and our infirmities, are many. Who is sufficient for these things? The apostle Paul, distinguished as he was by the eminence of his grace, experience, and services, set a high value upon the prayers of God's people. Hear how he pleads with them, with an earnestness, like that of a needy beggar requesting alms: "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together in your prayers to God for me," Rom. xv. 30. And pray, "That the word of the Lord may have free course, may run and be glorified," 2 Thess. iii. 1. The Lord has promised to do great things for his people, but he has said, that he will be inquired of by them, to do it for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Prize, and improve, your great privilege of access to the throne of grace, by which every believer in Jesus, like Israel of old, has power with God and with man. In answer to effectual fervent prayer, the army of Sennacherib was destroyed in a night (Is. xxxvii. 21, 36), and Peter was delivered from a strong prison, and from the malice of Herod, Acts xii. 5, 12. The efficacy of prayer is still the same. If the Lord were pleased to pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon his people, we should find our public ordinances more lively and more fruitful. We should then hope to be more successful in winning souls, and you might justly claim a principal share in the comfort and honour of seeing that good work prosper, to the success of which, your prayers would largely contribute. Next to the immediate assistance and consolations of the Holy Spirit, nothing encourages a faithful minister so much, as when he thinks he can perceive that, while he is speaking, his hearers are drawing down a blessing upon his words, by their prayers: it adds wings to his zeal, gives him a double impression upon his own heart, of the weight and importance of the truths he delivers; and enables him to dispense them with a double impression, of demonstration and power, upon the hearts of others.

3. By affording your countenance and assistance, according to the ability the Lord has given you, to promote every prudent and well-directed scheme which is set on foot for the more effectual spreading of that knowledge which is necessary in order to win souls, from the dominion of sin, to the service of God. Among these there are few, if any, which I can more warrantably commend to your attention, than the laudable and benevolent object of the Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor,—an institution, which it has pleased God signally to prosper, both by the large increase of their fund from year to year, and the many instances of the known happy effects which have followed the perusal of the books they have distributed. Many more instances, as yet unknown to us, we trust will be manifested in the great day, when the Lord shall appear in glory. Though the beginning of this Society was small, they have since the year 1750, when it was first formed, distributed more than four hundred thousand books, upwards of one hundred and five thousand of which were Bibles and New

Testaments; the rest were small and plain books, well adapted to the capacities and circumstances of those who have, mostly, but a confined education, and who have not much time for reading. The number of books bestowed annually has been on the increase from year to year. In the course of the last year, according to the printed account, the number of all the different books was fifteen thousand five hundred and eighty. How much these donations may have multiplied the means of religious knowledge among people otherwise destitute, in these kingdoms, in our Plantations, and in America, who can say, who can even conjecture? And we hope, by the benefactions of this year, the Society will be able to do more the following year than in any former.

People who are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge, are still very numerous. The much which has been done, is little compared with what the Society might yet do, were their resources equal to their wishes. I trust my request, that you will strengthen their hands at this time, will not be in vain; and that the brief account I have given you of their design and progress, will render farther solicitation needless. To bespeak the benevolence of my stated congregation, when a collection is proposed, I seldom do more than inform them of the occasion, and that it has my good wishes. After the repeated proofs I have had of their generosity, I need do no more. Nor will I suppose that it is necessary to use any farther arguments to prevail with you.

There may be some persons present, who will kindly assist us in procuring the means of religious knowledge for others, who are, hitherto, unacquainted with the power and the comforts of religion themselves. May the good Lord now awaken their desires to obtain the one thing needful, the pearl of great price! That knowledge which is necessary for the poor is equally so for you, whatever your situation in life may be. Will you pity others, and not feel a concern for your own case? You may deserve thanks from us for your ready assistance in this good work, and yet your heart may be in a state of alienation from God; you may have amiable qualifications, which entitle you to the esteem of your fellow-creatures, as you are members of society, and be at the same time destitute of the faith and hope of the gospel. Permit me, before we part, to offer one consideration to your serious thoughts. We read that eight persons only were saved in the ark (1 Pet. iii. 20), and only four of these, Noah and his three sons, were men. Considering the large dimensions of the ark, I think we may take it for granted, that Noah and his sons did not build it without assistance; and there were no men to assist them in escaping from the flood, but such as afterwards perished in it. What an awful case! To afford their help to build an ark for the preservation of others, and then to remain out of the ark themselves, until the flood came and swept them all away. There is a day of wrath approaching. It will burn like an oven; it will ravage like a flood. The gospel points out a refuge. The believer in Jesus Christ, like Noah in the ark, is in perfect safety; he is already delivered from condemnation, and shall stand before the Lord in humble confidence, when he shall come to judge the world. Your concurrence in this charitable design of distributing Bibles among the poor, that they may be timely warned to flee from the wrath to come is commendable:—thus you assist in preparing an ark for them; the very book or books which your money will purchase, may be blessed to the saving of souls, and consequently you may be the instrument. Can you bear the thought of being instrumental to the salvation of others, and to lose your own soul, and be yourself a cast-away at last, after all the means and opportunities you have been favoured with, after all the warnings and calls you have had, after all the good you may have done as a member of society? Alas! is it possible that you can believe there is a flood coming, and that an ark is prepared, and not flee, instantly flee, for refuge, to the hope set before you? O may the Lord make you truly wise, and effectually win your soul to himself!

Brethren, the wisdom spoken of in my text, is very different from the wisdom of this world, which knows not God. But the scripture cannot be broken; let us therefore abide by the sure decision of that word which cannot deceive or disappoint us. They are truly wise, who are wise to win souls; and though they may be now obscured by misrepresentations and reproaches, they shall shine, ere long, as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 19.

THE GREAT ADVENT;

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1789,

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING FOR THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1 THESS. iv. 16, 17.

Our beloved King is now on his way, amidst the acclamations of an affectionate people, to St. Paul's Cathedral: there he will, this day, make his public acknowledgment to God, who heard his prayer in the time of his trouble. It will be a joyful sight to thousands; and, perhaps, there is not a person in this assembly who has not felt a desire to be one of the spectators. But I am glad to meet you here. Many of you, I doubt not, earnestly and repeatedly prayed for the recovery of our gracious Sovereign; and you judge, with me, that the most proper expression of our gratitude and joy, is to unite in rendering praise to God upon the very spot where we have often presented our united prayers. And I infer, from the largeness of the congregation, that few who statedly worship with us are now absent, those excepted, who, residing in or near the line of procession, could not attend with propriety, nor perhaps with safety.

If he in whose name we are met shall be pleased (as his word encourages us to hope) to favour us with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to enable us, in the exercise of that faith which gives subsistence and evidence to things as yet future and unseen, to realize the subject of my text to our minds, we shall have no reason to regret our coming together upon this occasion.

The immediate design of the apostle, in these words, is to comfort believers under a trial, which some of you, perhaps, feel at this hour, and to which any of us may be called sooner than we are aware, the removal of our christian friends or relatives, with whom we have often taken sweet counsel, to a better world. Such a stroke, whenever it takes place, will awaken painful sensations, which he who knows our frame does not condemn. The tendency of the gospel is to moderate and regulate, but not to stifle or eradicate the feelings of humanity. We may sorrow, but provision is made that we should not sorrow like those who have no hope; "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. It is but a temporary separation; we shall see them again to unspeakable advantage. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." The change of expression here is observable, *Jesus died*. Death, to him, was death indeed, death in all its horrors; but he died for his people, to disarm death of its sting, to throw a light upon the dark passage to the grave, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. For now they that believe in him shall never die, John xi. 26. He so dispels their fears, and enlivens their hopes, that to them death is no more than a sleep; they sleep in Jesus and are blessed. And when he who is their life shall appear, as he certainly will, and every eye shall see him, they also shall appear with him in glory

Col. iii. 4. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

But I think I am warranted to consider the text in a more general view, and to accommodate it to the happy event which demands our especial thankfulness and praise on this day. Let our thoughts rise from the King's splendid, though solemn procession to St. Paul's, to contemplate that great advent of the King of kings, the idea of which filled and fired the apostle's thoughts, Rev. i. 7. Behold! he cometh in the clouds! He cometh in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, with all his angels, and with all his saints! Matth. xxv. 31; 1 Thess. iii. 12.

If I attempt to illustrate the procession (so to speak) of that great day, for which all other days were made, by the most striking circumstances of the present day, it will, indeed, be comparing great things with small. In some respects comparison will utterly fail, and I must have recourse to contrast. For what proportion can there be between finite and infinite, between the most important concerns of time, and those of eternity?

Let us, however, aim to fix our feeble conceptions upon the Personage whose approach is here announced; upon the manner of his coming; upon his train of attendants, and upon the final event of his appearance, with which the scene will close.

The Lord himself shall descend.—At another time, if both houses of parliament, the judges, the foreign ministers, the principal part of the nobility, and persons of distinction in the nation, were to assemble in St. Paul's, their presence would form a grand and affecting spectacle. But upon this occasion, though they should be all there, if the King was not seen among them, it is probable they would be all in a manner overlooked, and disappointment and anxiety would mark the countenance of every beholder. But it is more than probable, it is absolutely certain, that if all the glories of the invisible world were to open upon the view of those who feel their obligations to the great Redeemer, they could not be completely happy, unless they were permitted to behold his glory. He has stipulated on their behalf, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, should be with me where I am" (John xvii. 24); and by his grace, he qualifies them for their high privilege, so that even now they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Jesus is the light, the life, the sun of the soul that knows him, according to the revelation given in the scriptures of his person, offices, and grace. And, as the most magnificent palace would be but a dungeon, if it had no apertures to admit the light, so the whole creation would be dark and dreary to his people, were it possible that they could be excluded from his presence.

In this life, they can know but little of the particulars of that happiness which God has prepared for them that love him; but in general they know, and this suffices them, that they shall see him as he is (1 John iii. 2), and shall be like him, and with him. They love him unseen; and, while he is yet absent from them, the expectation, founded upon his own gracious promise, that he will shortly descend himself, to receive them, and to avow them for his own, before the assembled world, is the food and joy of their hearts, which soothes their sorrows, and animates them under every difficulty they are exposed to, at present, for his sake.

Oh! the solemnity, the terrors, and the glories of that approaching day! Then, they who have slighted his mercy, and abused his patience and forbearance, will tremble. Then, many whom the world has admired or envied; many of "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, shall call (alas! in vain) to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his presence," Rev. vi. 15, 16. But they who love him, and long for his appearance, will say, "Lo! this is our God we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation," Isa. xxv. 9. May we, my brethren, have grace "to use all diligence, that we may be found of him, in peace, without spot, and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14.

Should we be asked, Why does every face express an air of satisfaction to-day? Why is the feeling of our own personal trials in a degree suspended? Why does the public appearance of the King diffuse so general a joy among his loyal subjects? We can give a ready answer; We love our King. Few of us, indeed, are personally known to him. The blessing of being under a good King, can only be known to the bulk of a nation, by the influence of his administration upon the public welfare. This influence we have felt. It is true, we were too little sensible of it, too little thankful for it, until an alarming dispensation awakened our fears, lest we should lose the privileges we had not sufficiently prized; but then each man would remind himself, how highly favoured we had been, as a people, for many years, under his government; then, we understood our great obligations to the King, as the minister of God to us for good. We were sitting peaceably under our own vines and fig-trees, highly distinguished among the nations, by our civil and religious liberty, our prosperity at home, and our reputation abroad. The news of the King's illness, therefore, not only awakened our apprehensions, but revived our gratitude; and from the same principle, we now rejoice in his recovery.

Again, because we loved him, we sympa-

thised with him. We were afflicted by his affliction. We not only considered him as a King, but we felt for him as a man, a husband, and a father. Such an instance of the dependent, precarious state of human life; such a proof, that no rank or situation is exempted from a share in the calamities which sin has brought into the world, impressed us with compassion, blended with awe. And not our compassion only, but our prayers were engaged for the King, the Queen, and Royal Family. I am persuaded many persons could scarcely have prayed more earnestly had it been their own private and domestic concern. Our prayers have been heard, and signally answered, therefore we rejoice and give thanks to-day. We wish not to detract from the skill of physicians, they have been employed, and owned as instruments of the merciful will of God; but we ascribe the praise for a recovery, so little hoped for, and so critically seasonable, to him who raiseth the dead, who speaks and it is done.

And we rejoice in expectation. Indeed in this view we may, and should, "rejoice with trembling," Ps. ii. 11. How much may depend upon this single, this precious life, we know not; neither do we know what might have been the consequences, if the rumour, at which we once shuddered, and which, for some hours, was generally believed, that God had taken him from us, had proved true.

Let us praise God, who has preserved us from knowing them. But the manner in which we have been relieved encourages us both to pray and to hope, that our King is an object of God's especial care, and that he will live (long may he live!) to communicate still greater benefits to the nation, as the patron of true religion, the guardian of our constitution, and an exemplar of piety and virtue to his subjects: That God may give him to reign in the hearts of an enlightened, free, and affectionate people, and not to permit any device or weapon formed against him, to prosper.

For similar reasons, but vastly superior in importance, even as the heavens are higher than the earth, we rejoice in the assurance and prospect, that the Lord himself will descend. He is the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep (John x. 11); and, therefore, they who know his name, and trust in him for salvation, are bound to him by the strongest ties of attachment and gratitude. They admire his condescension and his love. To his mediation and care they are indebted for their life and hopes. They remember what they were doing, and how carelessly they were sporting in the path that leadeth to destruction, when he first stopped them, turned them, and led them into his fold. He is, even now, their sun and shield, their wisdom and strength; on him they cast their cares from him they receive their supplies; therefore they love him, though unseen (2 Pet. i. 8); and rejoice in the hope of his appearance.

They know that he who will descend to receive them, was once a man of sorrows, and a companion of grief. And though this too little affected them in the time of their ignorance, it has been otherwise since they have derived life from his death, and healing from his wounds. They have sympathized with him in the agonies which he endured in Gethsemane, and upon Mount Golgotha. They remember that his face was defiled with spitting, his head crowned with thorns, his back torn by scourges, his hands and feet pierced with spikes; that he made his soul an offering for their sins, and was crucified for their sakes. Thus he loved them, and gave himself for them, Gal. ii. 10. Thus he delivered them from approaching wrath; and this love has won their hearts. And they are waiting for his return from heaven (1 Thess. i. 8); that when they shall see him as he is, with all his angels, and with all his saints, they may join in nobler strains than they can at present reach, in songs of praise to him who redeemed them to God by his own blood.

But though they have much to praise him for in this life, they have much more to expect when he shall descend. Their privileges are great while here. They are already delivered from guilt and condemnation, they have access by him to a throne of grace, they have fellowship with him by faith, and joys which a stranger intermeddles not with—but it does not yet appear what they shall be, 1 John iii. 2. They are still in a state of warfare and trial; they are exposed to many troubles, to reproach, opposition, and temptation; they are still straitened and hindered, in their best attempts and desires, by an indwelling principle of evil. They are sowing in tears (Ps. cxxvi. 5), but when their Lord shall descend, they expect to reap with joy. He is coming to wipe away all their tears, and then they are assured they shall weep no more. The days of their mourning shall cease for ever. He has prepared for them a kingdom, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. i. 4. In that kingdom they shall shine forth, each like the sun in the firmament (Matth. xiii. 43), an immense constellation of suns!

The manner in which the Lord will descend can be but faintly illustrated by any circumstances borrowed from the pomp of this day. When the King enters St Paul's, his arrival will be announced, by the voice of the multitude, the discharge of cannon, and the deep-mouthed organ. But what are these, when compared with the voice of the Archangel, the shout of all who love his appearance, and that trump of God, which will shake the creation, and raise the dead? Perhaps by the word *Archangel*, in this connection, we may understand the Lord of angels, the King himself.

"He shall call to the heaven from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people," Ps. l. 4. The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," John v. 25. The *shout* seems a military term. By a shout soldiers encourage each other in the onset to battle; and there is a triumphant shout of victory when the enemy is utterly defeated. Such will be the shout when the Lord shall descend—His soldiers, who fighting in his cause, have often endured hardship, and have sometimes lost a skirmish, shall on the great day of decision, in the final event of the war, stand forth more than conquerors, through him that loved them, Rom. viii. 37. Their shout shall proclaim his praise: For they got not the victory by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, Ps. xliv. 3. The Lord leads them on, teaches them to fight, clothes them with complete armour, and supplies them with strength: He himself subdues their foes—and when he shall descend with glory, he will terminate the contest. His people will then utter a universal shout, and shall hear the noise of war no more.

When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, the trumpet of God was heard exceeding loud (Exod. xix. 16—19); it waxed louder and louder, the people trembled, and Moses spoke. The apostle records his words. Even Moses, the favoured servant of God, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake, Heb. xii. 21. But the sound of the last trump, when the Lord shall descend again, will be much louder, and the effects much more important and extensive. It will be heard, not only in the neighbourhood of one mountain, but from east to west, from pole to pole; not only by the living, but by the dead; by all who ever lived.

Then, at his great command, they that dwell in the dust shall awake, Is. xxvi. 19. The earth and the sea shall deliver up their dead. There will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. Some shall arise "to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2.

The joy, this day, for the recovery and appearance of our King, is general, I hope universal. I hope there are few persons in the kingdom who do not cordially share in it. However, if contrary sensations do exist, they are suppressed and concealed. But the Great King has borne with many avowed enemies, and with many traitors disguised under the profession of his name from age to age. He will not bear with them always. He knows them all, and not one of them can escape his notice. To them the language of the trump will be, Arise, and come to judgment! My heart is pained to think, that possibly, some of this description may be now present in our assembly. Yet I am glad you are here, that I may warn you to flee from the wrath to come. What a dreadful day will it be, when you, if unhumbled, unpardoned, unsanctified, as you now are, shall be compelled to stand before his tribunal! For we are assured, that when he returns to bless his willing people, he will summon his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, Luke xix. 27. He will place them at his left hand, and denounce that awful sentence upon them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," Matth. xxv. 41. As yet he is upon a mercy-seat. Oh! seek him, while he may be found; call upon him while he is near! Isa. lv. 6. There is forgiveness with him. Humble yourselves before him, and entreat for mercy. Entreat him to shew you who he is, and what he has done for sinners; that you may believe and be saved. Otherwise you must stand before his judgment-seat. Then his wrath will burn like fire.

But it is of the dead in Christ, I am chiefly to speak. These shall rise first, and together with those his servants who shall be living at his coming, shall be caught up to meet him in the air. There are expressions in scripture which intimate, that the servants of the Lord Christ, shall have the honour of being, in some manner beyond our feeble apprehension, assessors with their Lord in the day of judgment, Luke xxii. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 3. They will witness and approve his proceedings. In this state of infirmity, it becomes them, and is their duty, to pity and pray for the wicked; and to use all their influence to persuade them to pity themselves, to forsake their evil ways, that they may live. But in the great and terrible day, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, the righteous will be so perfectly impressed with the justice and holiness of the sentence of condemnation, that they will not hesitate to say, "Amen—So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord!" Judges v. 31.

But the apostle, using the language of prophecy, which speaks of the future as though it were actually present, says farther, "Then we that are alive, and remain, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Not, as I apprehend, that he expected to be living when the Lord shall descend; by the word *we*, he expresses his joint relation with the many members, which constitute the one body, of which the Lord Christ is the head. Of these, there will be some living when he shall appear. And of these he says elsewhere, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," 1 Cor. xv. 52.—They will not suffer that separation of soul and body which we call *death*. But as mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, he will change their vile bodies, according to the pattern of his glorious body (Phil. iii. 21), and they, like Enoch and Elijah of old, shall ascend, together with those who are raised from the dead, to meet him in the air.

These will constitute his train. The redeemed from the earth; they who lived and

died in the faith of his name, through a course of successive generations; and they who shall be alive at his coming, shall be all collected together, and prepared to welcome him.

Of the numbers who will rejoice to see the King to day, many, though loyal subjects, will only behold him at a distance; and the far greater part of his people will not behold him at all. Few but the nobility and principal persons can gain admission into the church; though the crowds in the street will participate in the general satisfaction. Could we suppose, that instead of the common people, the streets were filled, and the windows lined by the great, that all the sovereigns, potentates, and illustrious personages in Europe, were assembled to be spectators of the joyful event which now calls for our thanksgivings; splendid as the concourse might appear in the eyes of men, they would be unspeakably inferior, in rank and dignity, to those who shall meet the Lord. Not one of his people will be absent; and however poor and unnoticed many of them once were, they will then, every one, be greater than the kings of the earth. They will all claim the title, and the claim will be allowed, of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 18. They will all possess that honour which cometh of God only, John v. 44. The glorious company of apostles, the goodly fellowship of prophets, the noble army of martyrs, will march in the procession; and besides these, an exceeding great multitude which no man can number, whose exaltation and happiness are but imperfectly represented to us by images borrowed from the things which are deemed most valuable and honourable amongst men. They are said (Rev. iv. 10; vii. 9.), to be clothed with white robes, to have crowns upon their heads, to be furnished with harps, and to bear palms (the emblem of victory) in their hands.

"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. May grace preserve you from being ashamed of your Lord now, and you will not be ashamed of him, nor will he be ashamed of you, when he shall come to judge the world, Matth. x. 32; Mark viii. 38.

When all mankind shall be ranged before this great Judge, he will own and vindicate his people in the presense of assembled worlds, and pass an irrevocable sentence of exclusion and condemnation upon his enemies; and then, he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matth. xxv. 34), then, he will present them before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy (Jude 24); then time shall be no more (Rev. x. 6); they will no longer measure their existence by the revolutions of the sun and the moon; they will enter upon an eternal state. With this event the apostle closes the description in my text. Here he stops; the rest is too great for language to express, or thought to conceive. He can only say, "and so we shall for ever be with the Lord." Who can expound this sentence? We must leave this world, and be admitted into the inheritance of the saints in light, before we can fully understand the import of these few words.

We shall be with the Lord.—There is no doubt, that if the power of our King was equal to the benevolence of his heart, he would willingly make all who shall see him to-day, yea, all his subjects, in every part of his dominions, completely happy. But can he take them all with him to court? Can he treat them all as his own children? Can be invest them all with dignities and possessions equal to the largest desires of their hearts? Could we, for a moment, conceive it possible for an earthly king to do thus, still it would afford but a very faint illustration of our subject. The highest effects of his favour would be precarious and transient, confined to the term of a short life, and in their nature, incapable of answering the instinctive appetite of the soul of man, formed for immortality, and endued with a capacity for good, which nothing less than being with the Lord can satisfy.

When Peter saw his Saviour transfigured upon the mount, a glance of his glory instantly fixed and filled his mind. He forgot all inferior attachments, and said. "It is good to be here," Matth. xvii. 4. He would have been glad to build tabernacles upon the mount, and to return to the world no more. He knew not indeed what he said; there was much for him yet to do and to suffer for his Master: but he well knew why he said it; and all who are partakers of the grace of God are like minded with Peter. And though at present they walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Cor. v. 7), they are sometimes favoured with seasons of refreshment, with golden hours, when according to his gracious promise, he manifests himself unto them, as he does not unto the world (John xiv. 22), and causes his goodness to pass before them; then, for the time, they are raised above both the cares and the comforts of this world, and could be glad to remain with him. But, like Peter, they must return to fill up the duties of their situation in life, till his appointed hour of dismission. However, these foretastes convince them, that they cannot be properly happy till they are with him in his kingdom, where nothing will conceal him for a moment from their view.

Their nearest approaches to him now, are likewise subject to abatements. Something from within or from without still occur to interrupt, and too often to suspend their joys. Their communion with him is indistinct, through the medium of ordinances, and a veil of flesh and blood. This veil hinders them, not only as it is polluted, but as it is weak, and subject to many infirmities. We cannot see him, as

yet, and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. If he did not accommodate the discoveries of himself to the frailty of our nature, we should be overpowered. The beloved disciple had often conversed familiarly with his Lord, and reclined on his bosom, during his state of humiliation; but when he appeared in the isle of Patmos, though his majesty was attempered with mildness and love, and his design was to honour and comfort him, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead," Rev. i. 17.

Further, pain, indisposition, and trouble, often distract their attention, or detain them from the opportunities in which he has promised to meet his people. They are glad when it is said unto them, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxii. 1); but they are frequently shut up, and cannot come forth (Ps. lxxxviii. 8); and though he supports them under all their afflictions, yet it is no small trial to be confined from his ordinances. But when they shall meet their Lord in the air, they will be freed from every defect, defilement, and impediment. They will see him as he is, without any interposing veil or cloud. They will be out of the reach of sin, temptation, pain, and grief. They are blessed now, though often called to mourn, because they will then be comforted, Matth. v. 8.

Again, we shall be for ever with the Lord.—O that word for ever! even to be with the Lord, and to possess a happiness commensurate to the utmost grasp of our capacity; if it were only for a month, or a year, or an age, or a thousand ages—the thought that this happiness must at length have an end, however distant the termination might be, would cast a damp upon the whole enjoyment. But to know that the happiness is eternal, that they who are once with the Lord shall be with him for ever; this is, if I may so speak, the Heaven of Heaven itself. Such honour awaits all the saints: for thus hath the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, already declared: "Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the house of my God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Isa. lx. 20.

I hope I have not digressed from the design of this day, by attempting to lead your thoughts to the day of the Lord. I have availed myself of every occasion, which my views of the text have suggested, to impress upon your hearts and my own, a sense of the very great mercy which God, in answer to prayer, has bestowed upon us, by restoring health to the King, and enabling him to pay his public acknowledgment to the Most High, and to revisit his affectionate people. But never are our temporal mercies so sweet, so valuable, nor so likely to be permanent, as when they are thankfully contemplated in immediate connection with the hand of him by whom kings reign, and who doth what pleaseth him, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, Dan. iv. 25. Nay, to us, who are soon to pass into an eternal state, the most important concerns of nations and kingdoms are in reality trivial as the sports of children, unless we can acknowledge, trace, approve, and admire, the great and ultimate designs of God, to which all the revolutions that take place in human affairs are subordinate and subservient. His wise and holy providence ruleth over all; and every movement has either a more remote or a more direct tendency to bring forward the glories of that day, when the Lord himself shall descend to receive his own people, and to execute vengeance upon his adversaries.

Knowing to whom I am preaching, I have not thought it necessary to offer proof, that the God who has restored health to the King, and happiness to the kingdom, is he to whom my text refers: he of whom we say, in our public Liturgy, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge." It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. We rest in his own declaration, unmoved by all the cavils of those who, alas! know him not, that all things are delivered unto him, all power committed to him, in heaven and in earth, Matth. xi. 27; xxviii. 18. How else could we trust to him for the expiation of our sins, and the salvation of our souls; guilty and helpless as we are in ourselves, and conscious of the snares, difficulties, dangers, and enemies to which we are exposed? The Lord reigneth, Ps. xcix. 1. He is King of saints, King of the nations, King and Lord of the universe. The government is upon his shoulders, Isa. ix. 6. This God is the God we adore, and we now aim to imitate the songs of those with whom we shortly hope to join; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12.

While I exhort you to rejoice, and join with you in rejoicing, for the late instance of his goodness to the King, to the nation, and to ourselves, I feel the highest pleasure in the thought, that I see many around me, (O that I could hope the same of you all!) to whom I may warrantably say, rejoice on these accounts, but rather, especially, and above all, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20), and that the Lord whom you love, who now guides you by his counsel, will shortly descend to receive you to his glory, Ps. lxxiii. 24.

A HYMN OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

MAN can seldom prize the blessings
Which our gracious God bestows,
In the moment of possessing,
Or return the praise he owes:
But with other eyes, he views them,
In affliction's threat'ning days;
When he fears, lest he should lose them,
Then he trembles, weeps and prays.

II.

Comets, or eclipses wake him,
For a moment fix his eye,
Hurricanes, or earthquakes shake him,
And extort an anxious cry;
While the sun, with gentle motion,
Spreading blessings through the year,
Causes no devout emotion,
Neither gratitude nor fear.

III.

God in mercy to this nation,
Has afforded us a King,
Whose benign administration,
Cheer'd us like the sun in spring.
Truth and liberty were nourished,
By his mild auspicious rays:
Thus in peace, the kingdom flourish'd:
But our hearts forgot to praise.

IV.

When a dark eclipse succeeded,
Fear a thousand ills surmis'd;
Then we felt how much we needed
What we had too little priz'd:
Then we prayed, and since have proved
Fervent prayer is not in vain:
Prayer the dark eclipse removed,
And our sun shines bright again.

V.

Lord! to thee, the great Physician,
We our hearts and voices raise!
Thou didst answer our petition,
Now accept our humble praise!
Bless our King, Almighty Saviour!
May he long the sceptre wield,
For our good and with thy favour,
Thou his Wisdom, Strength, and Shield

THE IMMINENT DANGER AND ONLY SURE RESOURCE OF THIS NATION;

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1794.

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR

A

GENERAL FAST.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? JONAH iii. 9

How great is the power of God over the hearts of men! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were heathens. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet till Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his prediction, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in a time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow within forty days. But it is said, in verse 5, "they belived God." The awful denunciation made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation, of business and of pleasure, took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigour of which was extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy, though they had no encouragement but a peradventure: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

It appears from this, and other passages of scripture, that the most express declarations of God's displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance. Thus in the prophecy of Ezekiel (chap. xxxiii. 14, 15), "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die;" and again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah (chap. xviii. 7, 8), "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." The Lord God speaks to us by his word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot repent, he is of one mind, who can turn him? Numb. xxiii. 19; Job xxiii. 13. Yet when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgment of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation, repentance, and prayer, he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear, that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us (Matth. xii. 41), and condemn us, if we do not imitate their example, and humble ou-

selves before God? They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and immediately, on their first hearing him: and they sought for mercy upon a peradventure, when they could say no more, than Who can tell, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet has so solemnly declared?

God does not speak to us by the audible voice of an inspired prophet, nor is it necessary. We know, or may know from his written word, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, Is. iii. 10, 11. The appearance of an angel from heaven could add nothing to the certainty of the declarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a succession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the scripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequences, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the event, if we humbly confess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way which he has prescribed. The gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, is preached unto us. Jesus Christ as crucified is set forth amongst us, Gal. iii. 1. His blood cleanseth from all sin (1 John i. 7); and they who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified, Rom. viii. 1; Acts xiii. 39. They have also free access to a throne of grace, and like Israel they have power by prayer to prevail with God and with man, Gen. xxxii. 28. And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we repented not? Rev. ii. 21. May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his providence. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and it behoves us to learn righteousness. His hand is lifted up, and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet sooner or later, they must, they shall see, Isa. xxvi. 9, 11. The great God has a controversy with the potsherds of the earth. The point to be decided between him, and many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home is, whether he be the governor of the earth or not? His own people, to whom his name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concernments in subordination to this. If there be no other alternative, misery and havoc must spread, men must perish by millions, yea, the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonoured and defied with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own cause; and either in a way of judgment or of mercy all men shall know, that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the Old Testament so frequently repeated as this, Ye, or They shall know that I am the Lord. "Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good?" Ezekiel *passim*.

The rivers of human blood, and all the calamities and horror which overspread a great part of the continent, the distant report of which is sufficient to make our ears tingle, are all to be ascribed to this cause. God is not acknowledged, yea, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore men are left to themselves, their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the way of their own hearts. A more dreadful judgment than this cannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

And though we are still favoured with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems moving our way, and we have reason to fear it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord's gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him, and who know it is equally easy to him either to save or to destroy, by many or by few, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. Our fleets and armies may be well appointed and well commanded; but without his blessing upon our councils and enterprises, they will be unable to defend us. He can take wisdom from the wise and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissension. And by his mighty wind, he can dash our ships to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them as lead in the mighty waters. Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth not? Lam. iii. 37.

Our Lord and Saviour, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, "Think ye that these men were sinners, above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 4. May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts! It will not become us to say, either to God or man, that we have indeed sinned, but there are greater sinners than ourselves. It is true the French Convention, and many others who are infatuated by the same spirit, have exceeded the ordinary standard of human impiety and cruelty. But I hope there are multitudes in that nation, who though they are overawed by the oppressors, and dare not speak their sentiments, yet are mourning in secrecy and silence for the abominations which they cannot prevent. But the French have not sinned against such advantages as we possess. They were long the slaves of arbitrary power, and the dupes of superstition, and of late they have been the dupes of madmen, assuming the name of philosophers. We on the contrary, were born and educated in a land distinguished from all the nations of the earth by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of gospel truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins; and no

just comparison, in this respect, can be formed between us and other nations, until we can find a people who have been equally favoured, and for an equal space of time, by the providence of God, and have likewise equalled us in disobedience and ingratitude.

The most dreadful enormities committed in France, are no more than specimens of what human depravity is capable, when circumstances admit of its full exertion, and when the usual boundaries and restrictions necessary to the peace and welfare of civil society are judicially removed. The influence of daring infidelity and profligate example, aided by the peculiar state of their public affairs, have broken, in many instances, the strongest ties of social and relative life, and extinguished the common feelings of humanity.

Yet the unhappy French, though our inveterate enemies, are not the proper objects of our hatred or our scorn, but rather of our pity. They know not what they do. Let us pray for them. Who can tell but God, to whom all things are possible, and whose mercies are higher than the heavens, may give them also repentance? And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be instructed and warned by their history; for by nature, we are no better than they.

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting to-day, is to humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved, and imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty by sea and land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself and to his kingdoms.* I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—O for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described, in chap. vi! O that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence, and the attitude of their attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of his majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to him. O that by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory! If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the gospel prevented us from crying out, Wo is me I am undone! —we should at least say (the Hebrew word might be so rendered), I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to perplex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look at home. I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner. This confession suits us all, and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighbouring hills, usually sees it obscured by a cloud of smoke. This cloud is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. It is no unfit emblem of the sin and the misery which abound in this great metropolis. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, There iniquity is not yet full: (Gen. xv. 16), I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though by grace delivered from the reigning power of sin (Rom. vi. 14), are still sinners. In many things we offend all, in thought, word, and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light, and experience—for those personal sins, the record of which is only known to God and our own consciences—for the defects and defilements of our best services—for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dulness in the ways of God, our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our indifference to what concerns his glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions when our own temporal interests are affected,—are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that if he was to enter into judgment with them only, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them; "If, thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared," Ps. cxxx. 3, 4.

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins, can be competent judges of what the prophet meant, or felt.

* Title-page of the appointed form of prayer.

when he said, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell, than for our own. We shall be so, if with the eyes of our mind, we behold the King, the Lord of hosts; because his glory, which should be the dearest object to our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament, both with respect of his goodness to us, and our perverse returns to him.—He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to shew amongst us, such instances of his protection, his favour, his grace, and his patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation.

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour was first known in this island; it was probably at an early period of the Christian æra. But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance which covered Christendom for many ages, the dawn of returning gospel-light was first seen amongst us. From the time of Wickliff, the morning star of the Reformation, the true gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when they who loved this gospel have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful, in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light, but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree till of late unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars, which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies, and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our intestine broils at different times have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation, and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide-spreading and flourishing commerce has raised us to a pitch of opulence, which excites the admiration and envy of other nations.—Great Britain and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map; but our interests and influence extend, in every direction, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply with equal propriety to us? What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Isa. v. 4.

How is the blessed gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe, and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number: and for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both they who preach, and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known.

Wisdom is indeed justified of all her children, Luke vii. 35. The gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe, Rom. i. 16. It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery, guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, Titus ii. 12. But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they know not.—Alas! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversations, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace!

What then must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's sabbaths and worship abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. In a day when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping and mourning, thoughtless security, dissipation and riot, are the characteristics of our national spirit, Is. xxii. 12, 13. The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination, so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf.

I should be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unhappy business, if, upon this occasion, I should omit to mention the African slave-trade. I do not rank this amongst our national sins; because I hope and believe, a very great majority of the nation, earnestly long for its suppression. But, hitherto, petty and partial interests pre

vail against the voice of justice, humanity, and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practised in France, you would perhaps be shocked much more, if you could fully conceive of the evils and miseries inseparable from this traffic, which I apprehend, not from hearsay, but from my own observation, are equal in atrocity, and perhaps superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any or all the worst actions which have been known in France since the commencement of their revolution. There is a cry of blood against us; a cry accumulated by the accession of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year.

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation, in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him.

II. Have we not therefore cause to say, with the Ninevites, Who can tell?—Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility, that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations, and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed: if we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of his forgiveness, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves: if all the day long he has stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people (Rom. x. 21), and, hitherto, almost in vain: if neither the tokens of his displeasure, nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds,—who can tell if he will yet be entreated? May we not fear, lest he should say, My Spirit shall strive with them no more: They are joined to their idols, let them alone: Hosea, iv. 17. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face from you; when you make many prayers, I will not hear? Isa. i. 15.

Where are now the mighty empires, which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain-tops. Nothing of them remains but their names. They perished, and their memorials have almost perished with them, Ps. ix. 6. The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes for which he raised them up were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed, like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, "Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Jer. v. 9.

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece, and in the Lesser Asia? When the apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited his epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them were applicable to professors of the gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our faith and love are everywhere spoken of, and that we are examples to all that believe? That our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known, and the last to be more than the first? Rom. i. 8; 1 Thess. i. 7; Rev. ii. 19. Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny him? Titus i. 16.—That they are neither hot nor cold—That they have a name to live, and are dead—That they have at least forgotten their first love? Rev. iii. 1, 15; ii. 4. When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them; but instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became more and more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions which once rejoiced in the light of the gospel, have been long overspread with Mahomedan darkness; and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we (Jer. vii. 4), if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the ark of his glory into the hands of their enemies (1 Sam. iv. 5, 11); to teach them, and to teach us, that formal hypocritical worshippers have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell?—Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our foreign enemies, we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicked, Deut. xxxiii. 15. Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves: and that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain, in a time of disturbance and confusion: but they are abetted and instigated by persons

of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no union can long subsist.

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all things," Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. These words of Moses to rebellious Israel emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives, to a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments, let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful God! Who can tell but he may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not? If the professed business of this day be not confined to a day, but if, by his blessing it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then I am warranted to tell you, from his word, that there is yet hope. You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth, take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm (Isa. vii. 2); but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place, and your hiding place; under the shadow of his wings you shall be safe, Ps. xlvi. 1; xc. 1; cxix. 114.

1. He who loved you, and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him, Matth. xxviii. 18. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be never so unquiet, Ps. xcix. 1. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great designs; and the remainder of that wrath, all their projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain, Ps. lxxvi. 10. In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than he permits them. If they attempt it, he has a hook and a bridle in their mouths, 2 Kings xix. 28. When the enemies would come in like a flood, he can lift up a standard against them, Is. lix. 19. As he has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed (Job xxxviii. 10, 11); so, with equal ease, he can still the madness of the people, Ps. lxv. 7.

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know him not. But if you make him your fear and your dread, he will be a sanctuary to you, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, Is. viii. 13, 14. Ps. xlvi. 2.

2. Your part and mine, is to watch and pray.—Let us pray for ourselves, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning (Mark xiii. 35; xiv. 38), that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for his church, which is dear to him, as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his gospel, and the extension of his kingdom, till his great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory, Mal. i. 11. Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled: and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light would undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our beloved King and his family, upon the counsels of government and parliament, and upon all subordinate authority in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret mark of divine protection, Ezek. ix. 4. The Lord will be our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered, Matth. x. 30. Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace, he should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon him to afford us strength according to our day, Deut. xxxiii. 25. He is always near to his people, a very present help in the time of trouble; and he can make the season of their greatest tribulations, the season of their sweetest consolations, 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. And let us pray in faith. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an axe or a saw in the hand of God, Isa. x. 15; xxxvii. 14—36. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple, and prayed, and the Assyrian army melted away like snow. When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and

the iron gate opened, while the church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance, Acts xii. 5—13.

And as we have heard, so have we seen. God has signally answered the prayers of his people, in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved King, during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When he thus removed our apprehensions, we were like them that dream, Psalm cxxvi. 1.

I believe prayer was no less efficacious, towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of danger at that time as chimerical, because the Lord was pleased to avert it. But I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the persons we daily met with in the street, the many daring cabals which were held in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the hearts of men were turned like the tide in the critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident! Then we had a repeated proof that he hears and answers prayer!

The present likewise is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our enemies are inveterate and enraged. Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite in supplications for mercy, who can tell but he may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man? yea, we have encouragement to hope that he will be for us (Rom. viii. 31), and then none can prevail against us. But without his blessing our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings cannot succeed.

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls who are yearly precipitated by it into an eternal, unchangeable state,—you, I trust, will shew yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows, and, by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom, it would have escaped destruction, Gen. xviii. 32.

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly, who are little concerned for their own sins, and are of course incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it.—Or, if it please God to prolong our tranquillity, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once were as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to him. If you ask it of him, he will give it you; if you seek it in the means of his appointment, you shall assuredly find, Matth. vii. 7. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, Heb. x. 22, 27. If you are not saved by faith in his blood, you are lost for ever. O kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled, yea but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him, Psal. ii. 12.

MOTIVES TO HUMILIATION AND PRAISE;

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY, WOOLNOTH,

ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1797.

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR OUR LATE NAVAL VICTORIES.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.

HOSEA, xi. 8, 9.

THE most High God, in the revelation of his will to men, adapts his language to the weakness of our conceptions. Heavenly truths are represented by images taken from earthly things, John, iii. 12. The metaphors of eyes and hands are used in the scriptures to raise our thoughts to some due apprehension of his infinite knowledge, his omnipresence, and his almighty power, 1 Pet. iii. 12; Ps. lxxxix. 13. He is likewise spoken of, as deliberating, repenting, rejoicing, and grieving; yet we are sure that passions like those of which we are conscious in ourselves, cannot in strict propriety be ascribed to the holy and blessed God. No attentive and serious mind can be misled by this figurative analogy. We learn from the same scriptures of truth, that God is sovereign; that with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning, (James i. 17), that his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure (Is. xlvi. 10); and that all his works are perfectly known to him, from the beginning of the world, Acts xv. 18. The more familiar modes of expression are designed to teach us, not what he is in himself, but how it becomes us sinful creatures to be affected towards him.

Thus, though the purpose of God concerning Israel was fixed and unalterable, yet, to impress us with a sense of his inflexible displeasure against sin, and at the same time to leave open the door of hope and encouragement for penitent sinners, we read of a debate, as it were, between his justice and his mercy. Justice demanded that Israel should be given up, delivered up to vengeance, to such a destruction as that by which God overthrew the cities in the plain of Jericho, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, Deut. xxix. 23. But Mercy interposed, pleaded for a respite, and prevailed. O Ephraim, O Israel, justice, calls aloud for vengeance, but how shall I, how can I give thee up? No, I cannot, I will not, my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled.

Two reasons are assigned, in his pathetic expostulation, why he would still exercise long-suffering towards those who so justly deserved to perish: 1. I am God, and not man. The patience of man, or of any mere creature, would have been overcome long ago by the perverseness of Israel; but he who made them, and he only, was able to bear with them still. 2. I am the Holy One in the midst of thee. In that dark and degenerate day, when the bulk of the nation was in a state of revolt and rebellion, there were a hidden remnant who feared and worshipped the Lord, and who mourned for the abominations which they could not prevent, Ezek. ix. 4, 6. Of these the Lord was mindful, and for the sake of these, deserved judgments were suspended from falling upon the rest.

The people of Israel were for a time in a

state of hard bondage, and were severely oppressed in Egypt. The Lord brought them out from thence with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm. He afterwards drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; but he led Israel safely through the deep as upon dry land. In the barren wilderness he fed them with manna, and brought them water out of the rock. In the pathless wilderness he guided them, by a cloud in the day, and by a fire in the night. He fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and put them in possession of the land he had promised to their forefathers. They were a people whom the Most High selected for himself, as his peculiar treasure, Ps. cxxxv. 4. He was their God and their King. They were the only people who were at that time favoured with the knowledge of the true God, and how to worship him acceptably. He gave them his laws and ordinances. He resided among them, and honoured them with a visible token of his presence in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. They were likewise under an especial care of his providence. The fruitfulness of their land did not depend upon the climate, but the early and the latter rain returned regularly at the stated seasons, by his appointment; and when, in obedience to his commands, all their males from the most distant parts went up three times in a year to Jerusalem, and left their borders destitute of human defence, God so impressed the surrounding nations with awe, that, though hostile in their dispositions, they never availed themselves of that seemingly favourable opportunity for invading them, Exod. xxxiv. 24. Under the reign of Solomon, they enjoyed peace, plenty, prosperity, and wealth, in a degree till then unknown among the nations of the earth.

What returns did Israel make to the Lord for all these benefits? The history of their conduct is little more than the recital of a long series of ungrateful murmurings, disobedience, and rebellion. They resisted his will, broke his commandments, mingled with the heathen, and learned their ways. They repeatedly forsook the Lord God of their fathers, worshipped dumb idols, and practised all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before them. Their sins often brought calamities upon them. The Lord gave them up unto the hands of their enemies; they suffered by the sword, by pestilence and by famine. When he slew them, then they sought him; and when they sought him, he was entreated of them, Ps. lxxviii. 34. He delivered them out of their afflictions; but they soon forgot his goodness, and returned to their evil ways. He sent many of his servants in succession, to admonish and warn them; but they despised his words, they mocked his messengers, and misused his prophets, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

Can we wonder, if justice demanded the utter extirpation and ruin of a people so highly favoured, so well instructed, so often chastised and delivered, and yet so incorrigibly ungrateful, daring and obstinate! Is it not rather wonderful to hear the Lord expressing a reluctance to execute the sentence so justly deserved, and saying of such a people, How shall I give thee up?

But can we read the history of Israel, without remarking how strongly it resembles our own? Have we not been equally distinguished from the nations around us, by spiritual and temporal blessings, and by our gross misimprovement of them? We are assembled this day to join in public thanksgivings for public mercies, but we have great cause for public humiliation likewise. We have much reason to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord; but we have reason to temper our joy with trembling (Ps. ii. 11), when we compare the state of things around us, with that of Ephraim and Judah in the days of the prophet Hosea.

While too many persons lose their time and temper in political and party disputes, and refer all the calamities we either feel or fear to instruments and second causes, let us acknowledge that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Rev. xix. 6. Let us consider sin as the procuring cause of all our troubles. Let us recognize his hand in them, and confess that, in all the distress he has brought upon us, he has not dealt with us as our iniquities deserve. May our hearts be suitably affected, while I attempt a brief sketch of the abounding evils and abominations prevalent amongst us, which might justly provoke the Lord to sweep this land, so long the land of peace and liberty, with the besom of destruction! and then we shall be prepared to praise him for those merciful and signal interpositions of his providence, which afford us some ground to hope, that, notwithstanding all our provocations, he will not yet give us up.

I. Offences of the same kind may be heightened and aggravated by circumstances. Thus an insult offered to a benefactor, a parent, or a king, is deemed more grievous than if the person offended was in all respects an equal. In this sense, I fear the sins of Great Britain are of a deeper dye than those of any nation in Europe; because they are committed against greater advantages and privileges than any other people have enjoyed. May not the Lord appeal to ourselves, as to Israel of old, What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done? Is. v. 4. After the black night of Popish darkness, in which Christendom had been for ages involved, Wickliff, the morning-star and harbinger of the Reformation, arose in our borders. From his time, we have been favoured with a succession of preachers of the gospel, and of witnesses to its truth and power. Not a few of these sealed their profession with their blood; and a much greater number suffered in the

same cause, by fines, stripes, banishment, and imprisonment. But since the Revolution, and especially since the accession of King George I. to the throne, the spirit of persecution has been greatly repressed and chained up. We are not now called to resist unto blood. Nor is there any Protestant country where religious liberty is so universally enjoyed, and with so little restraint, as in the dominions of Great Britain.

O fortunati nimium, sua si bona norint!

Our constitution, the basis and bulwark of our civil liberty, is the admiration or envy of our surrounding neighbours. It cost our forefathers many struggles to bring forward and establish this national blessing; but we have enjoyed it so long, and so quietly that we seem almost to forget its value, how it was obtained, or how only it can be preserved? Wo be to us, if God should succeed the desires and endeavours of those who are disposed to exchange it for licentiousness! Add to this our public prosperity.—While we have been principals in many wars, which have spread devastation and misery far and wide abroad, we have had uninterrupted peace at home; and know so little of the calamities of war, that were it not for the increase of taxes, it is probable we should not be soon weary of hearing of battles, and the slaughter of thousands, provided victory declared on our side. Our arms and our commerce have, almost like the ocean, encompassed the habitable globe, and we are become the grand mart and emporium of the earth.

But what have been our returns to the Lord for all his goodness! May he not say of us, as of Israel, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me! Is. i. 2. I attempt not to explain the unfulfilled prophecies in the Apocalypse, but the first, second, and third chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah are so obviously applicable to the present state of these kingdoms, that we need look no further to perceive both our sin and our danger. May the Lord soften our hearts for our own sins, the sins of professors of the gospel, and those national sins which strongly mark our character as a people!

1. The true Christian sees much cause of humiliation in himself. Though he cannot but take sorrowful notice of what passes around him, he is more ready to scrutinize and blame his own misconduct, than that of other men. He confesses that his best is defective and defiled. Though he exercises himself to maintain a conscience void of offence, and dares appeal to the Lord for the sincerity of his aims, he owns that in every thing he comes short. His obligations to the Redeemer are immense, and his sensations of gratitude, and exertions in service, are vastly disproportionate to them: Yet having accepted the atonement, and resting his hope of salvation upon Jesus, though his imperfections humble him, they do not discourage him. But he acknowledges, that if justice were strict to mark what is amiss, his own sins are so many and so great, that he could have no right to complain, though he had a large share of the heaviest calamities incident to this mortal life. They who are thus minded are the chariots and horsemen of the land in which they live. They sigh and mourn for their own sins, and the evils which they cannot prevent. They have little thanks from the blind, careless, ungodly many around them. They are rather scorned and despised for their singularity, and unfashionable preciseness; but if this nation be spared from destruction, it will be for their sakes, and for the attention with which God regards their prayers. If we had no such persons amongst us, our fleets and armies would prove but a poor and precarious defence. But I trust their number is not small. They are dispersed up and down throughout the kingdom, and are the salt of the earth, which preserves us from total putrefaction.

2. By professors, we mean, those who assent to the leading doctrines of the gospel, and usually attend where it is preached. I know this distinction is deemed invidious. We are sometimes asked—Why do you appropriate the term gospel to yourselves? Do not all ministers preach the gospel? Most certainly not. The doctrines from many pulpits are contrary, yea contradictory. They cannot be all right. Yea the doctrines from too many pulpits in our established church contradict the Articles and the Liturgy, which the preachers have solemnly subscribed. The Articles and Liturgy bear express testimony to the universal and total depravity of human nature, the Deity and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of regeneration, a new birth, and a new life of sanctification, and of the abiding influences of the Holy Spirit of God, to awaken sinners, to produce faith, and to instruct, comfort, and establish those who believe. These points are essential to the scheme of the gospel, as it is set before us by the evangelists and apostles. They who espouse them are called professors—a title which includes all those whom I have already mentioned, but is extended to many more, or at least is assumed by them. Happy indeed would it be, if all who seem to agree in principles, were united in love among themselves, and exhibited in the sight of men, in their tempers, practice, and pursuits, a conversation becoming the gospel they profess. But in the days of the apostles there were those who, while they professed to believe in God, denied him by their works, who were enemies to the cross of Christ, and caused the good way to be evil spoken of, Phil. iii. 18; Titus i. 16. We lament, more than wonder, that it should be so now: for human nature is the same in all ages; and even among those of whom we

hope better—contentions, divisions, the heat of party-zeal, the coldness of brotherly love, and a blameable conformity to the spirit and customs of the world, are but too visible. The sins of professors alone, if duly considered, might make us apprehensive that judgment is even at the doors.

3. There are likewise sins so generally prevalent, so familiar and habitual in every rank of life, that they may properly be called national; because, either by their nature or their frequency, they mark and distinguish our public morals. To enumerate these, would be a painful and arduous task: but my subject requires me to notice some of the most prominent and notorious.

(1.) Infidelity.—Though the sophistry and machinations of the philosophers in France, and of those who style themselves the Illuminati in Germany, have more or less infected the whole of Christendom with their sceptical and dangerous sentiments, so that we hold them in common with many other nations, and though we have not like the unhappy French, openly and avowedly renounced the government of God; yet I fear that the worst kind of infidelity (which is still rapidly spreading through the land) is already become one of our national sins. Formerly, most of our freethinkers assumed the more modest name of deists; and though they rejected the scriptures, they professed a regard to what they called natural religion; they wrote likewise chiefly for men like themselves of a speculative and inquisitive turn, and did not appear much concerned to proselyte the common people: they seemed to allow that the principles of Christianity, though not necessary to persons of their sagacity, might be useful to preserve the peace and order of society, and to keep the vulgar within some bounds of good government and subordination. I have myself known those who, upon this ground, regularly, or at least frequently, attended public worship; not that they desired or expected any benefit from it, but to set a good example to their wives, children, and servants, whom they thought either not competent to understand their more sublime discoveries, or not fit to be entrusted with them. These champions likewise went forth singly to the combat; but now there is a strong compacted confederacy against all religion, both name and thing. Neither the mortal nor the immortal deists are much thought of at present. Philosophers have pushed their inquiries far beyond the narrow views of the deists, and proclaim themselves to be atheists. They tell us, that either there is no God, or that he does not take cognizance of human affairs. To relieve the consciences of men from those foreboding fears of a future judgment which are not easily separable from guilt, they boldly affirm death to be an eternal sleep. Though these and similar dreadful tenets, have not obtained the publicity and authority with us which they have in France, they have spread like a contagion through the kingdom. Multitudes in every degree of life, from the noble to the peasant have adopted them.

Not that I ascribe the progress of infidelity chiefly to Thomas Paine, or to writers of a superior class in the same line; but they have brought it more into view. Long before the modern philosophers were born, the fool had said in his heart, there is no God, Ps. xiv. 1. Infidelity is congenial to human nature. Infidel writings, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, have disclosed what for a time, was hidden or disguised: The spirits of many were prepared. They were infidels before, though for want of attention they scarcely knew it, or for want of boldness were afraid to own it. The effects are evident. With many people of fashion, infidelity is fashionable. Their dependents and servants imbibe their sentiments, and, so far as their ability reaches, imitate their practice. Every class of society downwards, tradesmen, porters, labourers, and hostlers, are no less pleased with thinking and acting without controul, than their superiors. Thus the bonds of society are weakened; vice, idleness, impatience, murmuring, and insubordination are seen, wherever we turn our eyes. When will these things end? When men agree to cast off the fear of God, they will seldom long accord in any thing else. Man in his natural state is a wild creature; but while his conscience is not quite hardened, while he acknowledges a God, and expects a future state and a day of judgment, though he commits many evils, he is restrained from committing many more, and greater, to which his corrupt propensities would otherwise incline him, and from which he would not be deterred by mere human laws and penalties. Such a sinner may be compared to a lion in the Tower: but an infidel is a lion in the street.

(2.) The great neglect of the obligations of religion, amongst those who have not explicitly cast off all regard to it, is a national sin. If a stranger from some remote part of the world, who understood our language, was to see and hear all that passes at a contested election, at our cockpits, gaming-houses, race-grounds, boxing-matches, and many other promiscuous assemblies, what judgment could he form of our religion? Or could he readily believe that we had any? And yet we could not tell him that they were all infidels. Many who live in the habitual neglect or breach of the precepts of scripture, would still be thought christians, though they have little, but the avowal of the name, to distinguish them from the most determined infidels. And it is to be feared, that such christians constitute a very great majority of the people of England.

(3.) The contempt of the gospel of Christ

will, I fear, be found a national sin, with the exception of the comparatively few who cordially embrace it. I have already explained in what sense I understand the word *Gospel*. When the doctrines of our established church, which in the main are conformable to the confessions and standards of all the protestant churches in Europe, are faithfully preached, and especially when first introduced into a parish, they usually cause a general alarm, they excite a general opposition. The gospel is shunned and dreaded like a pestilence, and the strongest exertions are made to prevent its entrance, or to expel it, if possible. The ministers who preach it faithfully are stigmatized and misrepresented. We learn from Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, that the name Christian was once so extremely odious, that whoever dared to own it was suspected as capable or guilty of the worst crimes, though no proof could be brought of his having committed any. The word Methodist has a degree of the like effect in our day. It is not now, as when first imposed, the name of a particular sect or body of people, but is applied to all who preach and approve the doctrines of the gospel, if they are not Dissenters. And it operates with a kind of magical force; the very sound of the word is sufficient to fill the minds of many people with prejudices against the truth. Neither learning, piety, an exemplary conduct, nor a regular compliance with the rules of the rubric, can always, or often, secure a minister from contempt, if the giddy world think proper to call him a Methodist. The people prefer those who will prophesy smooth things (Is. xxx. 10); and in most places they have their wish. Candour itself cannot deny, that there are in many parishes of this kingdom official shepherds, who have neither will nor skill to teach or watch over their flocks; and multitudes of people who for want of proper instruction, have little more knowledge of christianity than the Indians in America. Some of us have reason to be thankful to God and to our superiors in church and state, that we are not discountenanced or molested in the exercise of our ministry. But our path is not the ordinary road to approbation or preferment. There are not many evangelical clergymen who have benefices, and these have been chiefly bestowed by private patronage. *

(4.) Because of swearing, the land mourneth, Jer. xxiii. 10. This generally prevailing enormity has two branches—First, Customary profane swearing, blasphemy, and execration, in common discourse. We can seldom walk the length of a street, without having our ears pained, and our hearts wounded, by the bitter imprecations which thoughtless creatures utter against themselves, or each other. It might be expected that this horrid wickedness would be confined to the lowest and most abandoned of the common people. But it is far otherwise. Gentlemen and noblemen make a point of distinguishing themselves from the vulgar by their houses, their dress, their tables, and their equipage; but many of them in their language take a strange pleasure in degrading themselves to a level with the vilest of the species; so that, were it not for their exterior, we might be led to think that they had spent their whole lives among stable-grooms and postilions; and thus by their own proficiency and example they harden and confirm in their wickedness those whom they imitate.

The insult offered to the majesty and holiness of God by common swearing, contributes greatly to take off a sense of the heinous sin of perjury, or false swearing; an appeal to the God of truth in confirmation of a lie. This is the other branch of that swearing for which the land ought to mourn, and sooner or later, must mourn. Perjury is emphatically one of our national sins. "The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury. Many of them, it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may and do strictly observe them; but it is to be feared, a greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed, without hesitation, and without any desire of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced, that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy-body or a fool; yet they must be tendered, and must be taken as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of church-wardens and constables who are annually sworn is very great, and as these offices are chiefly held by rotation, in the course of a few years they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many or how few of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that while many, like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit: the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths, do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. The frequency of oaths, the irreverent manner in which they are often administered,

* Upon the death of the late Mr Romaine, Rector of St. Andrew, Wardrobe, and St. Ann's, Blackfriars, the inhabitants united in a petition to the Lord Chancellor, in favour of his Curate whom they wished to succeed him in the living: and the Lord Chancellor was pleased to grant their request. I mention this exception with pleasure; because I think it is much to the honour both of his Lordship, and of the parishioners.

and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit throughout the land."*

(5.) Oppression is a national sin, if the grievance be publicly known, and no constitutional measures adopted for prevention or relief. Charges of this nature have been brought against the exercise of our power, both in the east and in the west. I pretend not to say how far they are founded in truth, or exaggerated. I confine myself to a single instance, of which my own experience warrants me to speak. I have more than once confessed with shame in this pulpit, the concern I had too long in the African slave-trade. This trade, marked as it is with the epithet INFAMOUS by a vote of the House of Commons, is still carried on, and under the sanction of the legislature. Though the repeated attempts to procure the abolition of this trade have not succeeded, they have doubtless contributed to meliorate the condition of the blacks who are in a state of slavery in our West-India islands. The mode of their transportation thither from the African coast seems to be less tormenting and fatal than formerly. How far this trade may have been affected by the present war I know not. When I was engaged in it, we generally supposed, for an accurate calculation was not practicable, that there were not less than a hundred thousand persons, men, women, and children, brought off the coast, by the European vessels of all nations, and that an equal number lost their lives annually, by the wars and other calamities occasioned by the traffic, either on shore, without reaching the ship, or on shipboard before they reached the places of sale. It was also supposed that more than one half, perhaps three fifths of the trade was in the hands of the English. If the trade is at present carried on to the same extent, and nearly in the same manner, while we are delaying from year to year to put a stop to our part of it, the blood of many thousands of our helpless, much-injured fellow-creatures, is crying against us. The pitiable state of the survivors who are torn from their nearest relatives, connections, and their native land, must be taken into the account.—Enough of this horrid scene. I fear the African trade is a national sin, for the enormities which accompany it are now generally known; and though perhaps the greater part of the nation would be pleased if it were suppressed, yet as it does not immediately affect their own interest, they are passive. The shop-tax, a few years since, touched them in a more sensible and tender part, and therefore petitions and remonstrances were presented and repeated, till the tax was repealed. Can we wonder that the calamities of the present war begin to be felt at home, when we ourselves wilfully and deliberately inflict much greater calamities upon the native Africans, who never offended us? That is an awful word, "Woe unto thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled," Isa. xxxiii. 1.

(6.) A proud boasting spirit, and a vain confidence in our strength and resources, is a prominent part of our national character. Though infidelity, irreligion, contempt both of the law and gospel of God, profaneness, perjury, and oppression, expose us to his vengeance,—though the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and have fallen heavily on a great part of Europe,—and though his hand is evidently lifted up against us, yet few will see and acknowledge it, Isa. xxvi. 11. Instead of such a general spirit of humiliation as was awakened in Nineveh by the preaching of Jonah, so well becoming our sins and our situation, we still boast in our fleets and armies. Especially the Wooden Walls of Old England are spoken of as impregnable, and we still suppose ourselves to be sovereign lords of the sea. Some late providential dispensations were well suited to shew us, not only the sin but the folly of this spirit; but the impression, if any, was transient; it soon wore off. The praise justly due to our admirals, officers, and seamen, was readily offered; but unless the King had called us, as on this day, to unite with him in ascribing our success to the Lord of Hosts, who alone giveth the victory, even the verbal offering of praise to God would have been confined to a few. And still we boast. This arrogant spirit, and especially at such a time as this, is no small aggravation of all our other sins.

I could proceed to further particulars, but my spirits are depressed, and I hope the hearts of my hearers are duly affected by what I have already said. Is there any relief? Have we any ground to hope that the Lord will yet say of such a nation as this, "How shall I give thee up?" I turn with pleasure to this more comfortable branch of my subject.

II. Yes, though we have many causes for trembling, we are not without causes for a humble joy, and thankfulness.

1. I hope the occasion of our present assembling is a token for good. We are met in consequence of a royal proclamation, to join in spirit with our King, who, perhaps while I am speaking, may be entering St. Paul's Cathedral, attended by the royal family, both houses of parliament, and many of the nobility and principal persons of the court. He goes to make the most public and solemn acknowledgment of his dependence on the providence and power of Almighty God, and to ascribe to him to whom it most justly belongs, praise and thanksgiving for the many interpositions he has favoured us with as a people, in

* See Sermon on The guilt and danger of such a nation as this, p. 827.

this season of danger and distress; particularly, for the three signal, critical, and decisive victories which he gave us in succession, over the French, Spanish, and Dutch fleets. We remember with what universal joy the King's former appearance at St. Paul's, after his recovery from his illness, was entertained by his loyal subjects; and though the introduction of French principles and French politics, since that period, has not been without mischievous effects, we trust that the joy upon this occasion will at least be general.*

Though I cannot suppose that every person in the procession, or among the many thousands spectators, felt the same sentiments of gratitude to God, which induced the King to appoint a day of thanksgiving—yet I consider it as a public and national act; and in this view, contrasted with the atheistical rage and blasphemies of the French Directory and councils, who insult and defy, not these kingdoms only, but the God whom we worship, I indulge a hope, that, unworthy as we are of his mercy, the Lord will put a hook and a bridle in the mouths of these modern Rabshakehs, and will not give us up as a prey to their merciless rapacity and revenge.

2. When the French formed the design of invading Ireland, they thought themselves sure of success. They probably would have found encouragement in one part of that kingdom, if they could have reached it; and therefore they spoke like Pharaoh, who said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,—and they were disconcerted almost in the same manner. The Lord blew with his wind, and scattered them. Some of their stoutest ships, and many of their men, sunk as lead in the mighty waters, Exod. xv. 9, 10. And the Lord God did it himself. We had a strong fleet to watch and oppose them. But they were not permitted to come near, or even to see one of their ships. Nor had our boasted naval force the opportunity of firing a single gun in our defence.

3. The suppression of the mutiny, which like an infectious disorder pervaded all our fleets, was so sudden, so unexpected, and at the time when it was risen to such an alarming height that all resistance seemed vain, that it can only be ascribed to the mercy and power of God. Then, if ever, was the time, when the proud and the boasters trembled.—And while we were thus exposed and defenceless in every quarter, the providence of God laid an embargo upon the fleets of our enemies, so that they could not attempt any thing against us. It is further to be observed, that the mutiny at the Nore, which was the most formidable, as the ships had the full command of the river, so that nothing could pass or repass to or from London; this threatening disaster, which painted terror and dismay in the countenance of almost every person we met in the streets, in the event led to that re-establishment of our marine discipline, without which the strength of our invincible navy would have been but like a rope of sand. Well may we say, What has God wrought!

4. In the close of the year 1795, we felt a scarcity, and feared a famine. Opportunity was presented and greedily seized by monopolizers to raise the corn to such an enormous price, that had it not been for great and liberal exertions, the poor in many places, perhaps in every place, must have been absolutely destitute of bread. What must the consequences have been if God had visited us with a scanty or a wet harvest the following year? For our resource from foreign supplies was cut off in many parts, and rendered very precarious in the rest by the war. But he is a hearer of prayer. In 1796, the earth brought forth by handfuls, Gen. xli. 47. Such an abundant harvest, and such a remarkable fine season for gathering in the precious fruits of the earth, have been seldom known.

5. Our sins have involved us in a calamitous war; and though our sufferings are not to be compared with those of the countries on the continent where the war has raged, it has brought upon us much real distress. Many widows and orphans are bemoaning the effects. The decline of some manufactures, the increased taxes, the advanced price of most of the necessaries of life, are severely felt by the industrious poor, and by many families in the middling and lower classes of society. It is well known that there is a number of persons who unhappily employ their abilities and influence, to aggravate the sense of these difficulties, to inflame the minds of the sufferers, to work upon their passions, to alienate them from the government, and to make them long, if possible, for such liberty and equality as has already reduced France to the most pitiable state of anarchy and misery. That such attempts have not succeeded, that we are still preserved, not only from foreign invasion but from internal commotions, I ascribe to the power of the great God over the hearts of the children of men; and I consider it as a farther ground of hope that he will not give us up.

III. Why would he not give up degenerate Israel, when strict justice demanded their destruction? Two reasons are assigned in my text for his forbearance, which are well suited to encourage the prayers and hopes of those amongst ourselves who love and fear him.

1. I am God, and not man,—If we had offended men, or angels, as we have offended our Creator and Redeemer, and they had per-

* I was not mistaken in my expectation. The order and regularity with which the procession was conducted, the peaceful behaviour of the immense multitude of spectators, the serenity and mildness of the weather, so unusual with us in the depth of winter, the almost total exemption from what are commonly called accidents, and the quietness with which the evening closed, I consider collectively, as warranting a hope that the Lord was pleased to smile upon the day, and upon the design.

mission and power to punish us, our case would be utterly desperate. Only he who made us, is able to bear with us. All the attributes (as we speak) of the infinite God, must of course be equally infinite. As is his majesty, so is his mercy, Ecclesiasticus ii. 18. What is the puny power of man, compared with that almighty power which formed and upholds the immense universe? The disproportion is greater than that between a single drop of water and the boundless ocean. Thus his thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Who can set bounds to the exercise of his patience? When sentence was denounced against Nineveh, they humbled themselves before him, and he suspended the execution. There is at least a peradventure in our favour, "Who can tell if God will turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" He has said, "At what time I shall speak concerning a nation, or a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, or to destroy; if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them," Jer. xviii. 7, 8. We do not suppose that all the inhabitants of Nineveh were savingly converted; but they humbled themselves with one consent, they cried for mercy, and they were spared. We do not expect a national conversion, and I fear we have little prospect of a national humiliation. But,

2. I am the Holy One in the midst of thee.—Next to the consideration of his infinite mercy, this is our strongest ground for consolation. The Holy One is still in the midst of us? Degenerate and wicked as we are, God has a people, a remnant amongst us. I have spoken of these already. Their number is small if compared with the bulk of the nation; but if they could be collected together, they would form a considerable body (I trust it is an increasing body), who, though distinguished by different names, and dispersed far and wide into different parts of the land, are united, by a faith of divine operation, to one head, and in one common interest and design.—They belong to that kingdom which is not of this world, and which (unlike all other kingdoms) cannot be shaken. But their principles lead them to seek the welfare of the communities in which they live. These are, under God, *decus et tutamen*, the glory and the defence of Great Britain. They are lights shining in a dark place. They are believers, and their faith worketh by love. But as they follow the example of their Lord and Master, the world knows not them, because it knows not him. Here and there, individuals, by an unblameable consistent conduct, in a course of years, if they cannot change the hearts of gainsayers, are enabled to stop their mouths, and put their ignorance to silence by well-doing, 1 Pet. ii. 15. But many persons despise them in the gross, and affect to deem them (perhaps in defiance to the checks of their own consciences), either hypocrites or visionaries, credulous fools, or designing knaves. But their record is on high. They have access to God, and communion with him, by the Son of his love. They have the spirit of prayer, and their prayers are heard. The ship in which Paul sailed to Italy, was preserved from sinking, though apparently in the utmost danger, because the apostle was on board her. Not only was this servant of God as safe in a storm at sea as if he had been on shore, but for his sake the Lord preserved the lives of all who were in the vessel. The statesship of this nation is now in jeopardy, she is brought into deep waters, tossed with tempests, and her rowers (Ezek. xxvii. 26) are almost at their wits end; but there is a precious *depositum* on board. A people dear to the Lord are embarked in the same bottom with the rest, and we hope their prayers will prevail for the safety of the whole. The French, who know little of christianity but as they have seen it through the corrupt medium of popery, having triumphed over and melted down the golden and silver images of their tutelary saints, promise themselves an easy victory over us. They know not that the Holy One of Israel is in the midst of us, and that there are a people here who are under his special protection. They know not that, like Sennacherib, their success is wholly owing to their being instruments of his will, like saws or hammers in the hand of the workman; and that when they have accomplished his purpose, he can and he will say to them, Hitherto thou shalt come, and no farther. They have succeeded beyond their own expectations, far and wide upon the continent: but all their attempts and designs against our favoured land have hitherto been rendered abortive. We hope they will prove so.

At all events, it shall be well with the righteous, Is. iii. 12. Rejoice, believers, in the Lord. You may be assured upon the warrant of his faithful promise, either that he will preserve you from the evils which our sins give us such cause to apprehend; or if he should appoint you to share in a common calamity, he will make your strength equal to your day, and will prepare your shoes of iron and brass (Deut. xxxiii. 26), when any part of the road, on which you travel through this wilderness towards your heavenly home, shall prove very difficult and rugged. Pray for grace to sit loose to the world, and you will have nothing to fear. The first christians rejoiced in the spoiling of their goods; and so shall you, if the Lord calls you to the trial. You have the same Saviour to support you, and you likewise have treasures (Heb. x. 34), far better and more enduring, out of the reach of violence. The Lord teaches us to consider even the loss of life as comparatively of small importance, when he says, Fear not

them that can kill the body, but can do no more. They cannot do that without his permission. The very hairs of your head are numbered, Luke xii. 4; Matth. x. 39. And most of those who have suffered death for him who died upon the cross for them, have thought the honour of dying in his cause more to be valued than a thousand lives.

My feelings are painful for you who live without God in the world. I do not wonder if your hearts tremble like the leaves of a tree when agitated by a mighty wind, Is. vii. 2. You know not what may come upon you, but you forebode the worst—And should it prove so, you have no resource, no hiding place, no Almighty Friend to whom you may with confidence apply for help in time of trouble. Death, at least, is inevitable; and will you dare to die (yet die you must) if your hearts be unhumbled, and your sins unpardoned? We preach to you a gracious, powerful Saviour, who invites you to seek him, and has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Seek him then to-day whilst it is called to-day. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To-morrow is not your own.

But let believers rejoice and be glad. The Lord reigns, your Lord reigns, Ps. xcvii. 1. He who loved you, and gave himself for you, possesses and exercises all power in heaven and earth, Matth. xxviii. 18. Though clouds and darkness are about his throne, and his paths are untraceable by us, we are sure that he is carrying on his great designs, for the glory of his great name, and for the extension and establishment of his church in a way worthy of himself—worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness. Make his name your strong tower (Prov. xviii. 10) of refuge. Hold out faith and patience. Yet a little while, and we hope to meet, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest," Job iii. 17. And to hear those welcome words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matth. xxv. 34.

APOLOGIA;

OR

FOUR LETTERS

TO

A MINISTER OF AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH·

BY

A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

———Quid me alta silentia cogis
Rumpere?——— VIRG.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. ROM. xiv. 19. GAL. v. 6.

APOLOGIA,

&c.

LETTER I.

My Dear Friend and Brother,

You have more than once gently called upon me for the reasons which induced me to exercise my ministry as a Clergyman of the Church of England, rather than among the Dissenters, where my first religious connections were formed, and with many of whom I still maintain a cordial friendship. Hitherto I have usually waved the subject, and contented myself with assuring you in general terms, that as the preference I gave to the Establishment was the result of serious, and, I trust, impartial inquiry; so I had never seen reason to repent of it, no not for a minute, since the day of my ordination. I now purpose to give you a more particular answer. And as you are not the only person who has expressed a friendly surprise at my choice, I shall communicate my reasons from the press, that all my friends who have been at a loss to account for my conduct, may have such satisfaction as it is in my power to give them. I shall, however, keep you particularly in my eye while I write, that a just sense of the candour and affection with which you have always treated me, may regulate my pen, and preserve me (if possible) from that harsh and angry spirit, into which writers upon controversial points are too often betrayed.

I confess, that as in this business my conscience is clear in the sight of him to whom alone I am properly accountable; I could wish still to continue silent, and submit to be a little misunderstood by some persons whose good opinion I prize, rather than trouble the public with what more immediately relates to myself. But something upon this subject seems expedient in the present day; not so much by way of apology for one or a few individuals, as with a view of obviating prejudices, and preventing, or at least abating, the unhappy effects of a party-spirit.

There was a time when the Non-conformists groaned under the iron rod of oppression, and were exposed to fines, penalties, and imprisonment, as well as to cruel mockings, and the lawless rage of a rabble, for worshipping God according to the light of their consciences. Yet I apprehend their non-conformity was rather the occasional and ostensible, than the real cause of the hard treatment they met with. The greater part of the Non-conformist ministers of that day were the light and glory of the land.—They were men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, penetrated with a deep sense of the Redeemer's glory and love, and of the worth of souls. Their ministrations were accompanied with unction and power, and they were instrumental in turning many sinners from the evil of their ways. It is no wonder that the world hated such men; that snares were spread for their feet, their liberty abridged, and that many said, Away with them, they are not worthy to live! It is probable that if these servants of the Most High could have enjoyed that freedom for their persons and assemblies, which, in answer to their prayers, is now possessed by those who bear the same name, they would have been well satisfied that the Established Church should have remained in peaceful possession of its own order and ritual. And several among them, not the lowest in repute for wisdom and piety, continued long to worship occasionally in the Parish Churches, after they had been ejected from them as preachers. But things were studiously carried against them with a high hand. The exaction of re-ordination, and the little time allowed for subscribing the book of Common Prayer, which many of the ministers had not been able to procure when the law called for their assent to it, were two circumstances which greatly contributed to swell the Bartholomew-list. It was well known to some of the leaders in that unhappy business, that there were among the Non-conformists wise and moderate men, who were not disposed to quit their parochial cures, unless they were constrained by the harshest and most violent measures; such therefore were the measures they adopted.

It is our mercy to live in more quiet times. We are on all sides freed from restraints in religious concerns; and every person is at liberty to profess, preach, worship, or print as he thinks proper. But it is still to be lament

ed, that they who are united upon the same foundations, and agree in the same important leading principles, should lay so much stress upon their circumstantial differences in sentiment, as to prevent the exercise of mutual love and forbearance, and that, instead of labouring in concert within their respective departments to promote the common cause, they should be at leisure to vex and worry each other with needless disputation and uncharitable censure. I hope, amongst us, the High-Church principles which formerly produced unjustifiable and oppressive effects, are now generally exploded. But may we not lay a claim in our turn, to that moderation, candour, and tenderness, from our dissenting brethren, which we cheerfully exercise towards them? But as we (I think) are no longer the aggressors, so they seem no longer content to stand upon the defensive. We wish to join them with heart and hand in supporting and spreading the great truths of the gospel; and such as you, my friend, approve our aims, and rejoice with us, if God is pleased to give us success. But there are those among you, whose persons and general conduct we respect, from whom we do not find equal returns of good-will, because we cannot join with them in the support of a palladium which bears the name of the *Dissenting Interest*. I know not whether this phrase was in use a hundred years ago; but were I to meet with it as referring to that period, I should understand by it little more or less than the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. At present, when I consider the various names, views, and sentiments, which obtain among those who form this aggregate, styled the Dissenting Interest, I am at a loss what sense to put upon the term. May I not say without offence, that it is, at least, a very heterogeneous body? May I not hope, without presumption, that though you and I are not agreed on the subject of Church Government, yet I am related to you by a much nearer and stronger tie than that which binds you to the Dissenting Interest? I confess that so far as it is the interest of those who depreciate the person and blood of the Saviour, and deny the agency and influence of the Holy Spirit, or the total depravity of fallen man, so far I cannot (in a religious view) be a friend to it. On the other hand, so far as it regards those who love, avow, and preach the doctrines, experience, and practice, which both you and I include in our idea of the Gospel, so far I can truly say, though not a Dissenter myself, the Dissenting Interest is dear to my heart, and has a share in my daily prayers. And in this I am persuaded I speak the sentiments of many both ministers and laymen, in the Establishment. We are sorry, therefore (at least I am sorry), though not angry, when books are written, or declarations* (perhaps in the most solemn occasions of worship) unseasonably made, which seem not so much designed to confirm Dissenters in their own principles, as to place those who cannot accede to them in an unfavourable light; the ministers especially, who, according to some representations, must be supposed to be almost destitute of common sense, or else of common honesty.

When I write a letter, especially to a friend, I think myself released from that attention to method which I might observe if I were composing a treatise. As my heart dictates, my pen moves. I therefore hope you will bear with me if I do not come directly to what I proposed; which was, to give you some account of the motives of my own conduct. It may not be improper to premise a few preliminary observations. I shall not weary you by attempting to justify every thing that obtains in our way, nor call your attention to all the minutiæ which might furnish subject for debate to those who know not how to employ their time better. It would be mere trifling to dispute for or against a surplice or a band, a gown or a cloak, or to inquire whether it be the size, or the shape, which renders some of these habiliments more or less suitable for a minister, than the others. But perhaps a few strictures upon establishments and liturgies may not be wholly impertinent to my design.

That national religious establishments under the New Testament dispensation are neither of express divine appointment, nor formed in all points upon a scriptural plan, I readily admit. Whether upon this account they cannot be submitted to without violating the obedience we owe to the Lord Jesus as head and lawgiver of his church, I shall consider hereafter. At present permit me only to hope (for my own sake), that such submission is not absolutely sinful; and in that view to offer a word in favour of their expedience. I plead not for this or that establishment, or the administration of one preferably to another; but chiefly for that circumstance which I suppose is common to them all: I mean, the parceling out a country, the government of which is professedly Christian, and certain districts, analogous to what we call parishes, and fixing in each of those districts, a person with a ministerial character, who by his office is engaged to promote the good of souls within the limits of his own boundary. I think the number of parishes in England and Wales is computed to be not much fewer than ten thousand. The number of dissenting churches and congregations in England and Wales (if those whom I have consulted as the most competent judges are not mistaken), will not be found greatly to exceed one thousand. In how many, or in how few of these the old Puritan Gospel (if I may so call it) is preached or prized, I deem you a better judge than myself. It is certain, that the number of Dissenting ministers who are very willing it

* Some of the e letters were written in the year 1777.

should be publicly known that they differ widely from the sentiments of their forefathers, is not small. However, we will take them all into the estimate. Now, let us for a moment suppose the establishment with all its provisions removed and annihilated. In this case, some of the Dissenting ministers might indeed change their situations, and fix in places where they might hope for more extensive influence; but as none of them could be in two places at once, about nine-tenths of the kingdom would be deprived, at a stroke, of the very form of public religion, and reduced in a short time (for any relief the Dissenting interest could afford) to a state little better than heathenism. That there is any regard paid to the Lord's day through the greater part of the land, that the holy scriptures are publicly read to thousands who probably would otherwise know no more of the Bible than they do of the Koran, are good effects of the national establishment, which I think can hardly be denied, even by those who are most displeased with it. For this reason, if I could not conform to the establishment myself, I think I should speak respectfully of it, and bless God for it. Some established form of religious profession, with a full and free toleration for all who think they can serve God more acceptably upon a different plan, appears to me the most desirable and promising constitution, for preserving the rights of conscience, and for promoting the welfare of souls. I believe, therefore, that the church of England, as by law established (for it claims no higher title), though it be not a perfect institution, and notwithstanding its real or supposed defects, and the faults of individuals within its community, has been upon the whole, and will be, a blessing to the nation; and that its preservation is an effect of the wise and gracious providence of the great Head of the Church universal.

From the expediency of parochial order, I would farther deduce the expediency of a rubric and liturgy. For I cannot conceive an established church, without including, in my idea, some determinate rule or line respecting doctrine and worship, by which it is discriminated from other churches which are not so established. As to our liturgy, I am far from thinking it incapable of amendment; though, when I consider the temper and spirit of the present times, I dare not wish that the improvement of it should be attempted, lest the intended remedy might prove worse than the disease. As I am not called to defend it, I shall only say, what I believe will be allowed by many candid persons on your side, that the general strain of it is scriptural, evangelical, and experimental. It recognizes with precision the one great object of worship, in his personal distinctions, and glorious attributes: the honours and offices of the Redeemer, the power and agency of the Holy Spirit, the evil of sin, the depravity of man, and all the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. As to the composition, I question if any thing in the English language (our version of the Bible excepted), is worthy of being compared with it, for simplicity, perspicuity, energy, and comprehensive fulness of expression. But I suppose the objection does not lie so much against our liturgy in particular, as in general against the use of liturgies of any kind. And for aught I know, if the compilers of our liturgy could have expected, that all the parishes in the kingdom, and from age to age, would be supplied with ministers competently acquainted with the mysteries of the gospel, and possessed of the spirit of grace and supplication, they might have left them under less restraint in conducting public worship. I believe many of the Dissenters take it for granted, that a considerable part of our clergy are not only unable to pray in public to the edification of their hearers without a form, but are unfit for the ministerial office in every view. Should this be true, it is a truth which I hope would excite lamentation rather than ridicule or invective, in all who profess a regard to the glory of God, or love to the souls of men. But upon this supposition I should think an evangelical liturgy a great blessing; as it must secure the people, (that is the bulk of the nation) from being exposed to the same uncertainty and disappointment from the reading-desk, as they are liable to from the pulpit. For they who cannot, or do not preach the gospel, are not like to pray agreeably to the spirit of the gospel, if that part of the public service was likewise left to their own management. Or shall we say, it is an advantage to some dissenting congregations, that their ministers, not being confined to a form of sound words, there is little more of Christ or of grace to be found in their prayers than in their sermons? Is it not too hastily taken for granted by many, that God cannot be worshipped in spirit and in truth by those who use a form of prayer? or that he will not afford them who so approach him any testimony of his acceptance? If the words of a form suit and express the desires and feelings of my mind, the prayer is as much my own, as if I had conceived it upon the spot. On the other hand, if I have the greatest readiness and fluency in diversifying expressions, so that my prayer should always appear unstudied and new, yet if my spirit, or the spirits of those who join with me, be not engaged in it, though I may admire my own performance, and be applauded by others, it is no better than a mere lifeless form, in the sight of him who searcheth the heart. Not to say, that many who profess to pray extempore, that is, without either a printed or a written form, go so much in a beaten path, that they who hear them, frequently can tell with tolerable certainty, how they will begin,

when they are about the middle, and when they are drawing towards the close of their prayer.

It is said, that a prescribed form precludes the exercise of a gift in prayer, which is true; but then, as I hinted before, it in some good measure supplies the want of such a gift; and blessed be the Lord, there are many living witnesses who can declare to his praise, that a form does not restrain, much less preclude the exercise of grace. They know and are sure that their Lord and master owns and comforts them in what their brethren hastily condemn them for. It is well for us that he seeth not as man seeth, and is no more a respecter of parties than of persons.

It cannot be denied, that the Lord himself appointed forms of prayer and praise to be used in the Old Testament church. When the ark set forward, and when it rested, Moses addressed the Lord, not according to the varied emotions of his own spirit, but statedly in the same determinate expressions, Numb. x. 35, 36. So likewise in the solemn benediction which the high priest was to pronounce upon the people, Numb. vi. 23, 27. Again, at the presenting of the first fruits, though the heart of the offerer might be filled with gratitude, he was not to express it in his own way, but the Lord himself prescribed the form of his acknowledgement, confession, and prayer, Deut. xxvi. 12—15. But it may be said, these were enjoined under the Levitical institution, which is now abrogated, and that we live under a dispensation of greater light and liberty. I wish however, with all our light and liberty, we could more fully come up to the spirit of some of the devotional parts of the Old Testament, which were recorded for our instruction, and most certainly are not abrogated. The book of Psalms especially, contains a rich variety of patterns for prayer, if we may not call them forms, adapted to all the various exercises of the life of faith. And if, when I read or repeat such Psalms as the 63d, 84th, or 86th, I could feel, in the manner I wish, the force of every expression, I should think I prayed to good purpose, though I were not to intermingle a single word of my own. So likewise with respect to that summary which our Lord condescended to teach his disciples; though I believe it had a peculiar reference to the state in which they were before his passion, and while he was still with them; yet agreeable to the fulness of his wisdom, it is so comprehensive, that I apprehend every part of a believer's intercourse with God in prayer, may be reduced, without forcing, to one or the other of the heads of this prayer. And I should esteem it a golden hour indeed, one of the happiest seasons I ever enjoyed in prayer, if I could repeat it with a just impression of the meaning of every clause. But alas! such are the effects of our unhappy differences, or rather of a wrongness of spirit in maintaining them, and so prone are we to think we cannot be too unlike those whom we are not pleased with, that even the words which our Lord himself has taught us, are depreciated and disused by many, I fear, upon no better ground than because they are retained in the usage of the Church of England. Though, besides giving us a pattern to pray after that manner, he has at least permitted us to use it as a form, directing us, when we pray to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven, &c. If scriptural warrant be required, I think we have one more clear and express for the use of this prayer, than can be found for some things upon which no small stress is laid by our Dissenting brethren.

Some persons might possibly allege, that if the use of scriptural forms of prayer were admitted, it would plead nothing in favour of such forms as are of human composition. But as I believe the more judicious part of the Dissenters would not make this distinction, a few words may suffice for an answer. Most of us, when we preach, profess to preach the word of God, and I think we are sufficiently authorized to use the expression, so far as our sermons are explanatory of scriptural truths, and agreeable to them. For though the system of truth contained in the holy scriptures has a peculiar authority, as the fountain from whence we are to derive our public discourses, and the standard by which they are to be tried; yet truth, as to its nature, does not admit of degrees, but all propositions, if they be true, must be equally true, and every conclusion which is rightly inferred from scriptural premises, must be, in whatever words it is expressed (if they are precise and clear), as true as the premises from which it is drawn. If I give a just definition or explication of a doctrine of the Bible in my own words, the truth or importance of that doctrine is not affected or weakened by the vehicle in which I convey it; nor would a hearer have a right to withhold his attention or assent, from a pretence, that though the proposition itself was true, he was not concerned in it, because I had not expressed it in scriptural phrases. It is only upon this ground that the propriety and authority of preaching can be maintained; and the like reasoning may be applied to prayer. A prayer is scriptural, if conformable to the promises, patterns, and truths of scripture though it should not contain one phrase taken *totidem verbis* from the Bible.

May I not here appeal to the practice of the Dissenters themselves? I suppose Dr. Watts' Hymns, and his imitation of David's Psalms, especially the latter, are used, by a large majority of Dissenting congregations, in their public worship. Many of these pieces are devotional, that is, they are in the strain of prayer, or praise. They are therefore forms of prayer or praise; and when the first line is given out, it is probable that several persons in the

assembly know beforehand every word they are to sing. In some congregations the psalm or hymn is delivered line by line, and in most, the bulk of the people are provided with books. Now it appears to me, that when a worshipper who attends to what is going forward, and is not content with a mere lip-service, joins in singing verses, which express the desires and petitions of his heart to the Lord, he prays; and if he uses verses with which he was before acquainted, he prays by a form; he does the very thing for which we are condemned; unless it can be proved that the fault and evil which is essential to a form in prose, is entirely removed if the substance of the obnoxious form be expressed in metre or rhyme.

> Crito freely will rehearse
> Forms of prayer and praise in verse:
> Why should Crito then suppose
> Forms are sinful when in prose?
> Must my form be deemed a crime
> Merely for the want of rhyme?

I have heard of a minister who used to compose hymns in the pulpit. It was his custom to give out one line, and by the time the congregation had sung the first, he had a second ready for them, and so on, so long as he thought proper to sing. These were not forms, they were composed *pro re nata*. Before he had finished a second stanza, the former (as to the verse and cadence) was in a manner forgotten; and the same hymn was never heard twice. I know not what these unpremeditated pieces were in point of composition; but were I persuaded of the unlawfulness of forms of prayer, and, at the same time, approved of the practice of singing in public worship; I should extremely covet the talent of extempore hymn-making, as one of the most necessary gifts a minister could possess in order to maintain a consistency in his whole service.

I here close what I intended by way of introduction. In my subsequent letters, I purpose to acquaint you more directly with the reasons which determined my own choice, and which still satisfy me, that in receiving Episcopal ordination, and exercising my ministry in the established church, I have not acted wrong. At present, I shall relieve your attention, by subscribing myself

Your affectionate Friend and Brother.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

As such I address you; as such, notwithstanding our different views of church-government, you acknowledge me. You have confirmed your love to me by many repeated proofs, and it is the desire of my heart that nothing may take place on either side to weaken the exercise of that friendship, which having the faith and hope of the gospel for its basis, is calculated to subsist and flourish in a better world. With this thought upon my mind, it is impossible that I should write a single line with an intention of grieving or offending you; and I am persuaded, the same consideration on your part will dispose you to a candid perusal of what I offer. I had rather be silent than plead even for truth in an angry contentious spirit. For every year of my life strengthens my conviction of the importance of that divine aphorism, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

How far what I have suggested in favour of establishments and liturgies may appear conclusive to you, I know not. I depend much upon your candour; but I make allowances for the unavoidable influence of education, connection, and habit, both in you and in myself. We generally ascribe the dissent of those who differ *from* us, in part at least, to prejudices of this kind; but as it is very natural to think favourably of ourselves, we almost take it for granted that we have either escaped or outgrown every bias. Though some of the principles we maintain have been instilled into us from our childhood, and we have been confirmed in what we say is right, by the instruction, advice, and example o friends, exactly as others have been confirmed in what we call wrong; yet that positiveness which in them is the effect of ignorant prejudice is in us a very different thing; a just attachment to truth, and the result of impartial examination and full conviction. For my own part, I dare not say that I am free from all bias and prepossession, but I desire and endeavour to guard against their influence.

But though I have ventured to defend the propriety of a national establishment, and upon that ground, the expediency of a liturgy, I need not tell you that I had no hand in forming either the one or the other. By the allotment of Divine Providence, I was born in a nation where these things had taken place long before I came into the world. Therefore, when the Lord gave me a desire to preach his gospel, and it became necessary to determine under what character I should exercise my ministry; the question before me was not, What form of church-government I might propose as the most scriptural, if all parties amongst us were willing to refer themselves to my decision? But my inquiry was rather directed to this point, What would be my path of duty, *rebus sic stantibus*, living, as I did, in the island of Great Britain, and in that part of it named England? At first, indeed, I saw but little room for deliberation. For, about six years after I was awakened to some concern for my soul, my situation in life had secluded me equally from every religious party. During this period, in which I walked alone, the Lord was pleased to shew me the way to the throne of grace, and to lead me to study and prize his holy word. By his blessing, I made some advances in knowledge,

though slowly, under such discouragements and disadvantages, as they, who from the beginning of their inquiries, are favoured with public ordinances, and the help of Christian conference, can have no proper conception of. At length I became acquainted with some of his people, and had frequent opportunities of hearing the gospel. My first connections of this sort were chiefly with Dissenters, and brought me, as it were, into a new world. For, till then, I had hardly an idea of the different names and modes by which professing Christians were distinguished and subdivided, nor of the animosity with which their various disputes were carried on. But as I received benefit and pleasure from my intercourse with my new friends, it is no wonder that while my heart was warm, and my experience and judgment unformed, I should enter with readiness into all their views. Thus, together with the real advantages I obtained among them, I imbibed at the same time a strong prejudice against the established church, and hastily concluded, that though I might occasionally communicate with it as a private person, it would be impossible to officiate in it as a minister without violating my conscience. Accordingly, my first overtures were to the Dissenters; and had not the Providence of God remarkably interposed to prevent it, I should probably have been a brother with you in every sense. But my designs were overruled. A variety of doors by which I sought entrance (for I did not give up upon the first disappointment) were successively shut against me. These repeated delays afforded me more time to think and judge for myself; and the more I considered the point, the more my scruples against conformity gave way. Reasons increased upon me, which not only satisfied me that I might conform without sin, but that the preference (as to my own concern) was plainly on that side. Accordingly, in the Lord's due time, after several years waiting to know his will, I sought and obtained Episcopal ordination. And I seriously assure you, that though I took this step with a firm persuasion that it was right, I did not at that time see so many reasons to justify my choice, nor perhaps any one reason in so strong a light, as I have since. Far from having regretted this interesting part of my conduct for a single hour, I have been more satisfied with it from year to year. You will please, therefore, to accept what I am about to offer, not merely as an account of the motives which influenced me twenty years ago, but rather as the considerations which at this minute call upon me to be heartily thankful to the Lord, for leading me by a way which I knew not, to labour in that part of his vineyard, which experience has proved to be most suitable for maintaining my personal peace and comfort, and (I verily believe likewise) for promoting my usefulness as a minister.

Some of our Dissenting brethren, who I hope are willing to think as well of the awakened clergy as they can, kindly allow us to be well-meaning people; they believe we desire to be useful, and think it not impossible but that in some instances we may be so: but they pity us either for not having more light or for not having courage to follow that light, which they suppose must force itself upon us, if we did not wilfully shut it out. From what they hear of us they are staggered. They are loth to deny that the Lord is with us at all: but then, if the Lord be with us indeed, why are we thus? It is almost unaccountable to them upon this supposition how we can remain where we are. They are expecting from day to day, that if we are enlightened, as we profess, and honest men, as they wish to find us, we shall surely come out from Babylon, renounce our slavery and will-worship, and openly attach ourselves to the Dissenting Interest. Could we do this, and persuade our people to follow us, they would probably no longer doubt whether the Lord had wrought by our ministry, or not.

I could wish you not to think of me while you read the paragraph I am now beginning. You know many of our ministers, and you know that there are amongst them men of sound sense, solid judgment, and extensive reading: Men whom the Lord has been pleased to favour with an eminency in gifts and spiritual knowledge; in a word, able ministers of the New Testament: Men, who though in the sight of the Lord they lie low in the dust, conscious of inherent defilement, and that their best services need forgiveness; yet with regard to their fellow-creatures, can in the integrity of their hearts appeal to all around them, that their conversation is not unbecoming the gospel which they preach. Some of these men, at least, have carefully studied the subject matter of debate between us and the Dissenters, have read the books, and consider the arguments, which are supposed sufficient to convert and reform us; but after all their endeavours to obtain information, though they agree with the evangelical Dissenters in their views of the gospel (which yet they received not from them, but from the holy scriptures) they are still constrained to differ on the question of church form and order. Now why should this be imputed to their ignorance and blindness? Does it require a sharper eye to perceive the precise delineation of a gospel-church in the New Testament, if it be really there, than to apprehend and embrace what the scripture teaches concerning the person and characters of the Redeemer, the way of a sinner's acceptance, or the nature of the life of faith? These things, we are assured by the apostle, the natural man, however qualified, cannot discern. Surely the external form of a gospel-church cannot be equally mysterious with these doc-

trines; especially as it is professedly seen with the glance of an eye, by some persons who declare themselves enemies to mysteries of any kind. Or why should their not acceding to you be imputed to interested motives? There are with us men whose integrity and ingenuousness are in every other respect unimpeachable; and it is hard, that without sufficient evidence, they should be charged with prevarication in a business which concerns the honour of their Saviour, and the uprightness of their consciences in his sight. Besides, what can be the powerful motives for such hypocrisy? Do they by remaining in the establishment avoid the offence of the cross, and find a shelter from that opprobrium and opposition which must be their lot if they had the fortitude to unite with the Dissenters? Here at least, however, we may be mistaken. I apprehend the Lord has assigned to us the post of honour; and that in the treatment we meet with from an unbelieving world, our lot rather resembles that of the Dissenters of the last century than of the present. It is true, we are no more exposed to fines and imprisonment than you are; but if it be an honour to suffer shame for his name's sake, I think we have the pre-eminence. As to money-matters, I could name several of our clergy who are not so plentifully provided for in the establishment, but that if they were to leave us, and to go over to your side, it is very probable the manner in which converts of such characters and abilities would be received amongst you, might prove considerably to their emolument. Nor can it upon better grounds be ascribed to obstinate prejudice and incurable bigotry, that your arguments do not prevail. For it is well known, that many of our ministers shew a cordial and liberal spirit to the Dissenters, receive them gladly into their houses, attend occasionally upon their preaching, recommend and encourage applications for the support of their ministers, or places of worship, and are ready to concur with them in every plan for usefulness. And I believe this disposition would be more general, had not experience shewn that the candour of some clergymen in these respects, has been too often improperly requited by ungenerous attempts to prejudice and perplex our people, and to weaken our hands.

Yet one or another, or all these charges must be insinuated against us, rather than fallible men will suppose themselves any thing less than infallible, even in points of a circumstantial nature; and though others whom they have no reason to think inferior to themselves either in judgment or integrity, are compelled to differ from them.

> If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
> That 'tis so frequent—this is stranger still!

Be assured, dear Sir, that in thus apologising for my brethren, I write not only without their desire, but without their knowledge. I think I have now finished all my preambles, and I proceed immediately to acquaint you with my reasons for conforming to the Established Church, and continuing in it.

My first, and principal reason is, *The regard I owe to the honour and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as Head and Lawgiver of his Church.* I do not mean that this consideration obliges me absolutely to prefer the form of the church of England to any other form, but only that it will not permit me to join with those who make dissenting from it necessary in point of conscience.

I cannot suppose that any true christian in our land of light and liberty, will hesitate a moment to acknowledge that Christ is the one infallible, authoritative legislator and governor of his church; that he is the Lord, and the only Lord of conscience, and that nothing inconsistent with his revealed will should be practised, nothing that he has enjoined be omitted, by those who profess allegiance to him. But however generally acknowledged these principles are, I believe the misconstruction and misapplication of them have contributed more to divide the people of God, and to alienate their affections from each other, than any other cause that can be assigned. It seems reasonable to expect that they whose hopes are built upon the same foundation, who are led by the same spirit, who are opposed by the same enemies, and interested in the same promises, would look upon each other with mutual complacence, would love as brethren, would bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil their Master's law, and copy his example. But alas! a mistaken zeal for his honour fills them on all sides with animosity against their fellow disciples, splits them into a thousand parties, gives rise to fierce and endless contentions, and makes them so earnest for and against their respective peculiarities, that the love, which is the discriminating characteristic of his religion, is scarcely to be found amongst them in such a degree of exercise, as to satisfy even candid observers whether they bear his mark or not.

The visible church of Christ comprises all who call themselves by his name, and who profess to receive his gospel as a divine revelation. It is a floor on which the grain and the chaff are promiscuously mingled; a field in which the wheat and the tares grow together; a net inclosing a multitude of fishes both good and bad. But the visible church of Christ taken in this large extent, is not the proper subject of his government, as he is the King of saints. For his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, which none can understand, and his rule is a spiritual rule, which none can receive or obey, until born from above, and made new creatures by the power of the Holy Spirit. If these regenerated persons, who it is to be feared, are seldom the largest num-

ber in any denomination, be considered as detached from the visible church, the remainder is a mere *caput mortuum*, differenced from the world, which lies in wickedness, in nothing but a name, and in the privilege of having the oracles of God committed to it. But nominal christians, though they have, or may have in their hands the scriptures, which are able to make sinners wise unto salvation, are no less distant and alienated from the life of God (until he is pleased to reveal his power in their hearts) than Mahomedans or Heathens. And with respect to these, the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ is but little concerned with the different ways in which they may think proper to constitute themselves into national or particular churches, and please themselves with a lifeless form of worship, while their hearts are in a state of enmity to his grace. Admitting that a plan of a gospel-church was described with the same precision in the New Testament, as the institutions of the Levitical worship in the Old, and punctually complied with to the minutest circumstance, though the worshippers might applaud and admire their own exactness, and censure and despise all who differed a hair's breadth from them, yet if they did not serve God in spirit and in truth, their boasted church-order would avail them nothing. All that related to the worship of God under the law, was confessedly of divine appointment; and the people in the time of the prophets were not so much charged with neglecting the prescribed forms, as with resting in them. When this evil became general, and they thought to compensate for their want of spirituality, by their feasts, fasts, and sacrifices, the Lord expresses himself as displeased with his own institutions, Isa. i. 11—15. lxvi. 3, 4. Jer. vii. 8—14, 22, 23. They could plead his prescription for their observances; but in vain they trusted to the temple, and said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," when the Lord of the temple was departed from them. And certainly he will be no more pleased with a form without the heart now, than he was then.

I must therefore confine my inquiry to the church of Christ in a more limited and proper sense, as expressive of his mystical body, composed of all who by faith are united to him as their foundation and root, of all to whom he is the head of vital influence, who have fellowship with him in his death, and are partakers of the power of his resurrection. These are infallibly known only to himself. They are scattered far and wide, separated from each other by seas and mountains; they are a people of many nations and languages. But wherever their lot is cast, they hear his voice, are under his gracious eye, and the life which they live in the flesh is by faith in his name. They have not all equal degrees of light or measures of grace, nor are they all favoured with equal advantages for knowing or enjoying the full extent of the liberty of the gospel. But they are all accepted in the Beloved, and approved of God. They are spiritual worshippers, joint partakers of grace, and will hereafter appear together at their Saviour's right hand in glory.

At present they are in an imperfect state. Though created anew in Christ Jesus, they are not freed from a principle of indwelling sin. Their knowledge is clouded by much remaining ignorance, and their zeal, though right in its aim, is often warped and misguided by the corrupt influence of self. For they still have many corruptions, and they live in a world which furnishes frequent occasions of exciting them; and Satan, their subtle and powerful enemy, is always upon his watch to mislead and ensnare them. They are born, educated, and called under a great variety of circumstances. Habits of life, local customs, early connections, and even bodily constitution, have more or less influence in forming their characters, and in giving a tincture and turn to their manner of thinking. So that though, in whatever is essential to their peace and holiness, they are all led by the same Spirit, and mind the same things; in others of a secondary nature, their sentiments may, and often do differ, as much as the features of their faces. A uniformity of judgment among them is not to be expected while the wisest are defective in knowledge, the best are defiled with sin, and while the weaknesses of human nature which are common to them all, are so differently affected by a thousand impressions which are from their various situations. They might however, maintain a unity of spirit, and live in the exercise of mutual love; were it not that every party, and almost every individual, unhappily conceives that they are bound in conscience to prescribe their own line of conduct as a standard to which all their brethren ought to conform. They are comparatively but few who consider this requisition to be as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, as it would be to insist, or expect that every man's shoes should be exactly of one size.

Thus, though all agree in asserting the authority and right of the Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, the various apprehensions they frame of the rule to which he requires them to conform, and their pertinacious attachment to their own expositions of it, separate them almost as much from each other, as if they were not united to him by a principle of living faith. Their little differences form them into so many separate interests; and the heat with which they defend their own plans, and oppose all who cannot agree with them in a tittle, makes them forget that they are children in the same family, and servants of the same master. And while they vex and worry each other with disputa

tions and censures, the world wonders and laughs at them all. The spirit of love is restrained, offences are multiplied, and Satan is gratified by beholding the extensive effects of his pernicious and long practised maxim, *Divide et impera*.

I am far from supposing that all the various modes of church-government under which spiritual worshippers are cast, are equally agreeable to the spirit and genius of the gospel, or equally suited to the purposes of edification. Perhaps there is no considerable body of people who profess themselves Christians, however erroneous in their plans of doctrine or worship, among whom the Saviour has not some hidden ones, known to himself, though lost to human observation in the crowd of pretenders which surround them. The power of his grace can break through all disadvantages, and make a few individuals wiser than their teachers, by revealing his truth to their heart, sooner or later, so far as is necessary to salvation. But it must be owned, that some communities which bear the name of Christian have departed so very far from the simplicity of the gospel, that if we reason *a priori*, we are ready to conclude it as almost impossible for a converted person to continue a single day in such a communion. But hypotheses cannot be maintained against plain facts. Thus the Church of Rome, not merely by adopting an unmeaning burdensome train of ceremonies, but by her doctrines of Papal infallibility, invocation of saints and angels, purgatory, absolution, the mass, and others of the like stamp, is become so exceedingly adulterated, that possibly some persons who may read these letters, will form an unfavourable opinion of me, for declaring that I have not the least doubt but the Lord Jesus has had, from age to age, a succession of chosen and faithful witnesses within the pale of that corrupt church. Yet I should hope that they, who, having themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, know the language of a heart under the influence of his Spirit, would, in defiance of Protestant prejudices, be of my mind, if they had opportunity of perusing the writings of some Papists. If such persons as Fenelon, Pascal, Quesnal, and Nicole (to mention no more), were not true christians, where shall we find any that deserve the name? In the writings of these great men, notwithstanding incidental errors, I meet with such strains of experimental godliness, such deep knowledge of the workings of the Spirit of God, and of the heart of man, and such masterly explications of many important passages of scripture, as might do honour to the most enlightened Protestant. And yet these men lived and died in the Popish communion; and, to their latest hours (for any thing that appears to the contrary), thought they could not separate from it without sin. And, though I have not equal means of information, I can as little doubt that the Lord has a people likewise in the Greek Church, which, as to its external frame, seems to be little less unscriptural than the Church of Rome itself.

However, I desire to be thankful that I am not a Papist. I am at least one step nearer to the true and acceptable worship of God. For I believe the most rigid of our Dissenting brethren will allow, that the Church of England, if almost, yet is not altogether so depraved and corrupt in its constitution as the church of Rome. I am now in my track, and shall trouble you with fewer digressions in the sequel. My next point will be to examine the different claims of Protestant churches to the honour they all assume, that their respective institutions are most conformable to the rules the apostles have laid down on the subject of church-government, and express the greatest regard to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the undoubted Head and Lawgiver of his Church. And to avoid as much as I can, encumbering what I write in an epistolary way to a friend, with the stiffness of argumentation, I shall content myself with giving you a simple account of what occurred to me upon this head, when I made the inquiry for my own direction. But it is time to conclude this letter by assuring you that I am,

Your affectionate Friend

LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

If the authority of men truly respectable for learning, judgment, and grace, were sufficient to determine the question, Which of the various forms of church-government now obtaining among Christians is most agreeable to the letter and spirit of the New Testament? a modest inquirer, who wishes for the sanction of those whom he esteems wiser and better than himself, would probably, without hesitation, join himself to that party to which he might be first led to apply for direction. For whatever difference there may be in the merit of their several claims for pre-eminence, the claim itself is made with an equal degree of confidence by them all. At a time when I was very sensible of my own incompetency to decide this point for myself, I received (as I hope) much benefit from the writings of Bishop Hall, Reynolds, Davenant, Mr. Hooker, and other divines of the Church of England. I perceived they were persons of strong sense, extensive literature, sound in the faith; and from such accounts of their lives as I could collect, I judged they had been zealous and diligent in their callings, and burning and shining lights in the world. I could not perceive that any of them were dissatisfied with the Established Church in which they lived

and died; and some of them I found were very strenuous in its defence, not only pleading that it was lawful to maintain communion with it, but offering many arguments to prove that it was even sinful to separate from it, and that it was the only resemblance of the primitive apostolical church. I own to you that I thought some of their assertions upon this head were too strong, and some of their arguments not fully conclusive. Yet I was a little staggered, and it gave me pain to be forced to differ in any point from men whom I believed to have been full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. However, some general idea I possessed of the liberty of the gospel, a conviction that the Lord had a people and a work in other countries where the form of the Church of England could not take place, and the previous attachment I had to the Dissenters, with whom, as I have said, I was first acquainted, prevented me from becoming what is called a High-Church man. But as for these reasons I could not give the Church of England an exclusive preference, or think myself authorized to brand those who dissented from it with the hard names of schismatics and fanatics, so on the other hand, I could not go into the opposite extreme, or suppose that a church in which the Lord employed and owned such valuable men, and had a numerous spiritual people, was no better than a Babylon, from whence all who loved his name and salvation, were in duty and conscience bound to withdraw.

Many books likewise came in my way written by divines of the Church of Scotland. In the writings of Durham, Fleming, Halyburton, and others, I found proofs that they were not inferior in light, holiness, and a sound spiritual judgment, to the most eminent luminaries of our own Church. In what concerned the life and power of religion, I could perceive no considerable difference between them. As they were all taught by the same Spirit, so they were all teachers of the same truths. But in their sentiments upon church-government they differed very widely. Wherein they agreed, I could fully agree with them. Wherein they differed, I was left in the uncertainty of a traveller, who, inquiring his way of two persons, is told by one to turn to the right, and by the other directly opposite to the left. My English guides would persuade me that the form of the church from the apostles days was Episcopal. My Scotch guides were rather more positive that our prelacy was almost equally with the papacy, a branch and a mark of Antichrist. If I compared the sufficiency of each to decide for me, I knew not which to prefer. On both sides were men of wisdom and grace, and who I believed would not wilfully mislead me; on both sides they confessed themselves in general to be, like myself, fallible, and liable to mistake. Only in this one point both sides appeared confident, that they could not be mistaken, and yet their opinions were not only diverse, but contradictory.

The suspense in which I was held by these incompatible claimants, sent me more readily and attentively to renew my inquiries amongst my former friends of your denomination. By these I was instructed, that I need not trouble myself with weighing and comparing the arguments which the English and Scotch Churches had to offer in favour of their respective constitutions, for they were both equally destitute of any foundation in truth or scripture: That I had only to read the New Testament for myself, and it must appear very plain, that the Lord Christ had not left a concern of this importance undetermined, but had directed his apostles to leave in their writings a pattern, according to which it was his pleasure all his churches in future ages should be formed: That the first churches were Congregational or Independent, and that every other plan was unscriptural, and a presumptuous deviation from the declared will of the Lord. As I had been a debtor to some of their writers likewise, and was personally acquainted with several of their ministers, their representation had so much weight with me as to increase my embarrassment.

My difficulties grew upon me, when I found, by consulting different Independent writers who had professedly treated this subject, that though they were of one mind in asserting that a plain and satisfactory pattern for this Congregational order might be easily collected and stated from a perusal of the New Testament; yet when they came to delineate and describe it according to their own idea, they were far from being agreed among themselves as to the nature and number of the officers, powers, and acts which are requisite to the constitution and administration of a regularly organized gospel-church. I formerly employed much time and attention in this disquisition: but not having for many years past reviewed a controversy which I think rather dry and uninteresting, I cannot from memory enter into a detail of particulars. Nor is it needful. Of the fact, I think I may be confident, that there is not such an agreement amongst them as might be expected, if the plan from which they all profess to copy was clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament as obligatory upon all christians. Here I was at a loss again; for, if I could have admitted their principle, That every circumstance of worship and government in a church ought to have the warrant of a precept or a precedent from the scripture, still I needed help to digest and put together the several regulations which were dispersed in so many different parts of the Gospels and Epistles; for I found myself unable to frame the detached materials into one orderly structure by my own skill But when they who professed to have the light which I wanted

were themselves divided upon the point, I was precluded from the hope of any certain assistance; for as to probabilities and conjectures, I might as well depend upon my own, as upon those of another.

Nor was this the whole of my difficulty. I was honestly advised to read and examine for myself. I did so; and it appeared to me, by comparing what I read with what I saw, that the Independents could not, at least did not, keep closely to their own principles. I thought I met with usages in the churches planted by the apostles which did not obtain in any of the Congregational churches I was acquainted with; and, on the other hand, I noticed some usages among these of which I could find no traces in the inspired account we have of the primitive churches. Permit me, by way of specimen, to mention one instance in each kind. If it was necessary I could mention several, but I wish not to be tedious.

The apostle Paul addresses the Corinthians as a church of Christ; and we have from him a larger and more particular account of the practices of their church than of any other. In chap. xiv. of his first epistle, after censuring and correcting some improprieties which had obtained in their public assemblies, he gives them this direction: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." The general practice of the Congregational churches in our time, seems not to comply with this apostolic injunction. I think, my friend, in your assemblies, especially in your solemn stated worship on the Lord's day, there is seldom more than one speaker. The same minister who preaches, usually begins and ends the service. Should it be pleaded that the apostle speaks of prophesying, and evidently supposes that the church of Corinth was favoured with extraordinary gifts and revelations which are now ceased, and that therefore the rule cannot in that respect extend to us, I have two answers to make.

In the first place, though we do not expect extraordinary revelations, we have encouragement to hope for the presence of our Saviour, and the gracious influences of his Spirit, when we meet in his name, sufficient to enable us to speak to his praise, and to the edification and comfort of our brethren, if not in foreign tongues, at least in our own. And it is probable that you have more than once been a hearer in a public assembly, when your heart has been so warmed and impressed with the truths of the gospel, that you would not have been unwilling to have ascended the pulpit yourself, either to confirm or correct what you had been hearing, or to indulge the liberty you found in your mind upon some other important subject. Perhaps something was then revealed to you, which might have been very suitable to the occasion, and to the state of the congregation. Why did you not then declare it? Why did you neglect to stir up the gift of God that was in you? Would it have been contrary to the custom of your churches? But would you not, upon your principles, have been justified by the custom of a New-Testament church, and the injunction of an apostle?

But, secondly, and chiefly, I answer, if it be admitted, that because the primitive churches had extraordinary gifts, there are some things in their practice which are not proper for our imitation *, who have not the same gifts; then I quite give up the hope of being able to determine the exact and invariable form of a church, by such lights as the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles afford me; unless some man or set of men be qualified and commissioned to draw the line for me, and to shew me distinctly how far, and in what instances, the state of the first christians is limited from being a pattern to us, by the extraordinary dispensations of that age; and how far, and in what cases, their pattern is binding upon us still, notwithstanding those dispensations have long since ceased. To be directed to study these churches as a model, and to be told at the same time, that some parts of their practice were not designed for the imitation of future ages, without distinctly specifying which were, and which were not, is rather the way to perplex and bewilder an inquirer, than to help him to information. Upon this ground, though I might refuse to trust the assumed infallibility of the Pope, I must feel the need of an infallible visible guide to reside somewhere in the church; for without such assistance I could not take a single step with certainty, but must be liable to stumble at the very threshold of my inquiry.

I think it is the usual practice in your churches, to require from all persons who wish to be admitted into your communion, an account, either verbal or written, of what is called their experience; in which, not only a declaration of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their purpose, by grace, to devote themselves to him, is expected, but likewise a recital of the steps by which they were led to a knowledge and profession of the gospel. I select this as one instance in which I conceive you have neither precept nor precedent in the scripture for your warrant. A profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of acceptance of him, and submission to him in his offices and characters, supported by the evidence of a gospel-conversation, should, I apprehend, be deemed sufficient to entitle a person to church-membership; and especially by those who so loudly insist upon the evil of superad-

* See Neale's History of the Puritans, Vol. i. p. 379. 2d edit. 1732.

ding any regulations to those which are already provided by our Lord and his apostles. The authority which makes it a pre-requisite for admission, that a person shall relate how and when he was awakened, what exercises of mind he has passed through, and other particulars of a like nature, appears to me to be as merely human, as the authority which prescribes the canons of an established church. If the practice be defensible, it must be on the plea of expediency. It is not my present business to inquire how far it may be expedient for young converts, for young persons, especially for young women, to be compelled to speak before a public assembly; or if that be dispensed with for the sake of other interfering expediencies, how far it is expedient to trust to a written experience: otherwise I could say a good deal upon this head. But it is sufficient for my purpose, if no shadow of this practice can be found in the New Testament. On the contrary, I read, that when Saul, after he escaped from Damascus, essayed to join himself to the disciples, it was Barnabas, and not Saul * himself, who informed them both of his conversion, and of the extraordinary manner in which it was effected, subjoining a testimony of his conduct from the time that he professed a change. But if expediency may warrant a measure in your churches not expressly commanded, why not likewise in ours? Be it either right or wrong in one case, it must be so in both. And therefore my remark on this particular will at least have the force of *argumentum ad hominem*.

I am afraid I shall weary you by only giving a brief account of the long and intricate road which I travelled, to discover, if I could, the best constituted church. But I must entreat your patience a little longer, till I bring you to the end of my journey. It may be necessary to inform some of my readers, though not you, that a considerable part of the congregational churches differ from the rest, with respect to the mode and subjects of baptism. At the time when my thoughts were most engaged about church-order, I lived in intimate habits of friendship with several Baptists, who were very willing to assist me in settling my judgment. These, though they would have been pleased to see me yield to the arguments of their Pædobaptist brethren, would not be satisfied that I should stop where they stopped. They urged scripture precepts and precedents to lead me farther; and said, that none of the Congregational churches but their own were agreeable to the mind of Christ. They told me, that though I should acknowledge and embrace the Congregational order, which undoubtedly was the only one countenanced by scripture, still I could not be right till I had renounced what I called the baptism I had received in my infancy, and submitted (as they termed it) to baptism by immersion, to which I was bound not only by the practice of the primitive church, but by the example of our Lord himself, who, when he was baptized, said for our instruction, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

I own, Sir, that if I had seen it my duty to accede to the church-order of the Independents, I know not but their principles would have led me from them again, to join with the Baptists. How they, who, maintaining infant-baptism, press scripture precedent so strongly upon me, answer the Baptists, who in this point press it as strongly upon themselves, is not my concern. I did not stand upon the same ground, and therefore the arguments of the Baptists did not much affect me. I thought the example of our Lord pleaded as much for circumcision as for baptism. I questioned whether I, a poor sinner, had any call to imitate him in those things which it became him as our Surety to perform, in order to fulfil all righteousness. It appeared to me that John's baptism and the christian baptism were different; and though the Baptists assured me that they were the same, I was not convinced. I thought they were plainly distinguished in Acts xix. 2—5. And I was grieved by the attempts of some wise and good men to wrest a sense from that passage, so contrary to its plain and obvious meaning, merely to support a favourite scheme. And as the form of christian baptism is laid down in express words, Matth. xxviii. 19, I must continue to think it different from the baptism of John, till I can have sufficient proof that John baptized our Saviour in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I found likewise that the Baptists, though unanimous against us, and even against those who in every point but one agree with them, were divided among themselves. Some of them, while they practise what they think a duty, do not so peremptorily prescribe it to others, as to make it an indispensible term of communion; but they will receive a person as a church-member whom they judge to be sound in the faith, and of a good conversation, though they consider him in strictness of speech as unbaptized. But others are much hurt by this concession, and bear testimony against it as unscriptural and wrong. Their views are so strict that if they certainly knew that a person who wished to communicate with them was the most eminent christian in the land, unless he was likewise baptized in their manner, they could not, they durst not admit him to the Lord's table, to eat of that bread and to drink of that cup which is by his command and appointment, the privilege and portion of all believers. This difference of judgment between them has been thought so important, that the reasons for and against, and their mutual censures of each other, have

* See Dr Guyse on Acts ix. 27.

been laid before the public, by good men on each side of the question.

Now, my dear friend, upon this state of the case, what could I do? I had reviewed and compared the sentiments of a number of respectable writers and ministers of different names. In essentials I agreed with them all, and in circumstantials I differed no more from any of them, than they differed among themselves. They all confessed they were fallible, yet they all decided with an air of infallibility; for they all in their turns expected me to unite with them, if I had any regard to the authority and honour of the Lord Jesus as Head of the church. But the very consideration they proposed restrained me from uniting with any of them. For I cannot think that I should honour the headship and kingly office of Christ, by acknowledging him as the Head of a party and subdivision of his people to the exclusion of the rest. Every party uses fair sounding words of liberty; but when an explanation is made, it amounts to little more than this—that they will give me liberty to think as they think, and to act as they act; which to me, who claim the same right of thinking for myself and of acting according to the dictates of my own conscience, is no liberty at all. I therefore came to such conclusions as these—that I would love them all—that I would hold a friendly intercourse with them all, so far as they should providentially come in my way; but that I would stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made me free, and call none of them master—in fine, that if others sought to honour him by laying a great stress on matters of doubtful disputation, my way of honouring him should be by endeavouring to shew that his kingdom is not of this world, nor consists in meats and drinks, in pleading for forms and parties, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that neither circumcision is any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and the faith which worketh by love. There was a time when I could have joined with the Dissenters, if the providence of God had opened my way to them; but farther experience and observation have so far altered my judgment, that had I my choice to make again, it seems to me, that I could no more officiate as a minister among any people who insist upon other terms of communion than those which our Lord has appointed, faith and holiness, than I could subscribe to the dogmas of the Council of Trent. My regard to his honour will not allow me to exclude any whom I believe he has been pleased to receive. Thus much for the first reason of my conformity. Yet in justice to the non-conformists I must add, that if I wished to avail myself of the sanction of great names, I could mention some among them, who, if they were now living, I am persuaded would not blame me for conforming, though they could not in conscience do it themselves. Particularly I judge thus (from many of his writings) of the truly great Mr Howe, whose praise is in all the churches.

I am sincerely yours, &c.

LETTER IV

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

I HAVE given you the chief reason why I am not a Dissenter; and it appears to me a sufficient one, though I could assign no other. I have, however, two or three more to offer you, but I hope to comprise them all within the compass of this letter. For indeed I begin to be weary of a subject which is not quite suitable to my taste and inclination. But it seems not unseasonable, and I hope may not be unuseful to shew you that the preference I have given to the Church of England, is not the effect either of inconsideration or prejudice.

My second reason for not being a Dissenter is, *Because I highly value the right of private judgment, and my liberty as a man and as a Christian.* Here again I think we are agreed in principle. You rejoice in the name of a Protestant Dissenter, as setting you free from the shackles and impositions of men; and probably think of me and my brethren in the Establishment, with a degree of friendly pity; taking it for granted, that the engagements we are under hold us in a painful state of subjection and bondage, from which you charitably wish to see us released.

We are obliged to persons of your candid disposition for your sympathy and good wishes; and we repay you in kind. As we cannot think exactly alike, this seems the best method we can take. Harsh censures and angry disputations would be unbecoming our profession, and hurtful to our spirits; but it can do us no harm to pity and pray for each other. Perhaps you are ready to say, "You would surely pity me if you knew all my inward and outward trials; but you need not pity me for being a Dissenter, because I account it my great privilege." I may say the same, with the alteration of one word. If you knew the evils which I feel within, and the snares and difficulties which beset me from without, you would pity me indeed. But that I exercise my ministry in the Church of England, appears to me, as things stand, to be rather a subject for congratulation than compassion. I cannot become a Dissenter till I am weary of my liberty. If you please we will compare notes upon this head.

Let me first speak of the restraints we are under. I am bound, by my subscription, to the forms and rubric of the Common Prayer; but my subscription was really *ex animo*. I approve the service, and therefore it is no bur-

den to me to use it. I do not consider it as faultless, nor can I subscribe to any book of human composition in the same absolute manner as I would to the Bible. But by assenting to our church-ritual I give up less of my own private judgment for the sake of peace, than I should by espousing the rules and practices of any Dissenting churches I am acquainted with. Again, having accepted a designation to the cure of souls, my public ministry is thereby confined to parish churches, and I cannot, consistently with what I conceive to be the import of my voluntary engagements, preach at random, and in all places without reserve. But this is no restraint upon my conscience. While I have the examples of our Lord and his apostles in my view, I cannot doubt the lawfulness of preaching on mountains or plains, in market-places, or on the sea-shore. But things in themselves lawful are not always, nor to all persons, expedient. I approve of parochial order. I interfere not with the conduct of others; but believe it is, upon the whole, best for me to confine myself to the duties of my own charge, and to such opportunities of preaching in parochial pulpits as may occasionally offer. Between the one and the other I have sufficient employment. And though the Bishop who ordained me laid me under no restrictions, I would not have applied to him for ordination, if I had not been previously determined to submit to his authority and to the rules of the church. I thought, and still think it my duty to preserve a consistency of character; for I was not ordained to be an apostle or evangelist, to spread the gospel throughout a kingdom, but to take care of the particular flock committed to my charge. But I need not enlarge upon this point, as I think the Dissenters do not in general by their practice countenance what we call irregularity, but are almost as seldom seen preaching in the fields, or by the way-sides, as the most regular of our clergy; though they cannot plead our reasons for not doing it, and are certainly not restrained either by the precepts or precedents of the New Testament.

Nor am I under any disagreeable constraint from my superiors in the church. The Archdeacon in his district, and the Bishop in his diocese, hold their respective visitations; the former annually, the latter once in three years. At these visitations the clergy (especially in the country) are expected to attend. On these occasions we answer to our names, hear a sermon or a charge, and usually dine together. There is nothing painful to me in paying these tokens of respect to my acknowledged superiors, and receiving marks of civility from them. At all other times, while we keep within the limits which I have already told you, I subscribed and consented to *ex animo*, we scarcely know, at least we do not feel, that we have any superiors. So far as I am concerned, I have reason to acknowledge that the administration of our church-government is gentle and liberal. I have from the first preached my sentiments with the greatest freedom. I always acted in the parishes which I have served according to my own judgment: and I have done some things which have not the sanction of general custom, but I never met with the smallest check, interference, or mark of displeasure from any of my superiors in the church, to this hour. Such are my restraints, and such is my liberty. I am bound by no regulations but what I myself approve; and within these boundaries I do as I please, no man forbidding or controuling me.

Indeed I have often thought that I have as good a right to the name of Independent as yourself. Neither you nor I would assume it to the prejudice of our dependence upon our Lord and Saviour; and, with respect to the influence of men, perhaps we have the advantage of you. I think we are more dependent of our brethren, and more independent of our people.

Though according to your plan every particular church is called independent, as possessing and exercising every kind of church-power within itself, and not subject to the controul of any other Christian society; yet, considering you as a body, or (according to the modern phrase) an interest, there is a kind of union and association among your ministers, which has a greater effect than some people are aware of, and which I apprehend may in some instances be rather unfriendly to the liberty you so highly prize. Some of your ministers, from their situation or connection, have more influence than others. They have opportunities of assisting poorer ministers, and are, I suppose, in many cases, the judges whether they shall be assisted or not, and how far. They who best know human nature, are best qualified to judge how far the professed independence of your churches may be abated by this influence of connection; and whether the weight of a board of ministers may not be occasionally felt by those who pity us for being subordinate to a bench of Bishops. I own, I have upon some occasions been led to compare your ministers to a company of soldiers in their exercise, where every one must move in a prescribed line, keep the same pace, and make the like motions with the rest, on pain of being treated as refractory. Ministers in the establishment know nothing of these restraints. We are connected in love, but not upon system. We profess the same leading principles and aims, but each one acts singly and individually for himself.

I think we are likewise more independent of our people. The constitution of your churches, which you suppose the only one

agreeable to the scripture, appears to me faulty, in giving a greater power to the people than the scripture authorizes. There is doubtless a sense in which ministers are not only the servants of the Lord, but, for his sake, the servants of the churches; but it is a service which implies rule, and is entitled to respect. Thus the apostle says, "Obey them that have the rule over you." Their office is that of a steward, who is neither to lord it over the household, nor to be entirely under subjection to it, but to superintend and provide for the family. Scriptural regulations are wisely and graciously adapted to our state of infirmity; but I think the power which the people with you claim, and attempt to exercise, is not so. Many of them, though truly gracious persons, may, notwithstanding, from their situation in life, their want of education, and the narrowness of their views, be very incapable of government; yet when a number of such are associated according to your plan, under the honourable title of a Church of Christ, they acquire a great importance. Almost every individual conceives himself qualified to judge and to guide the minister; to sift and scrutinize his expressions, and to tell him how and what he ought to preach. But the poorer part of your flocks are not always the most troublesome. The rich can contribute most to the minister's support, who is often entirely dependent upon his people for a maintenance; their riches likewise give them some additional weight and influence in the church; and the officers, whom you call the Deacons, are usually chosen from among the more wealthy. But it is not always found that the most wealthy church-members are the most eminent, either for grace or wisdom. We may be rather sure, that riches, if the possessors are not proportionably humble and spiritual, have a direct tendency to nourish the worms of self-conceit and self-will. Such persons expect to be consulted, and that their judgment shall be followed. The preaching must be suited to their taste and sentiment; and if any thing is either enforced or censured which bears hard upon their conduct, they think themselves ill treated. Although a faithful minister, in his better hours, disdains the thought of complying with the caprice of his hearers, or conniving at their faults, yet human nature is weak, and it must be allowed, that in such circumstances, he stands in a state of temptation. And if he has grace to maintain his integrity, yet it is painful and difficult to be obliged frequently to displease those on whom we depend, and who in some other respects may be our best friends and benefactors. I can truly say, that my heart has been grieved for the opposition, neglect, and unkindness, which some valuable men among you have to my knowledge met with, from those who ought to have esteemed them very highly for their work' sake. The effects of this supreme power lodged in the people, and of the unsanctified spirit in which it has been exercised, have been often visible in the divisions and subdivisions which have crumbled large societies into separate handfuls, if I may so speak. And to this I am afraid, rather than to the spread of a work of grace, may be ascribed in many instances, the great increase of the number of your churches of late years. Now, in the Establishment, we know but little of these difficulties: we are not so much at the mercy of our hearers for our subsistence; and though we probably preach to some who are wiser and better, as well as richer than ourselves, we have no hearers who assume a right to direct us, or whom we should stand in fear of, if they did. For my own part, I wish to have a spirit willing to profit by a hint, even from a child, and to pay attention to the advice of any person who speaks to me in love, and in a right temper. But humble loving christians are more disposed to find fault with themselves than with their minister, and to receive instruction than to offer it. But should a conformist to the world, or a zealot for a party, expect me to accommodate my preaching to his practice, or to his Shibboleth, I could give him an answer without being afraid of consequences.

I may add, that I apprehend we have more liberty with respect to our pulpits. At least I remember to have heard sermons from some of your pulpits, the strain of which has been so very different from the professed sentiments of the proper pastor of the church, that I have thought to myself, How came this minister to preach in this place? Upon inquiry I have found at one time, that the gentleman belonged to the *connection*; at another, that he was asked to preach at the desire of a principal person in the church or congregation, who it seems approved him, though I was persuaded the pastor did not.

I esteem it likewise a branch of my Christian liberty, that I can hear whom I please, and form what acquaintance I please, among the various denominations of Christians, without being called to account for it. I hope the Dissenters are likewise growing more into this liberty. However, as I know some among your people who would willingly hear us occasionally, were they not afraid of their ministers; so I know some of your ministers who would be willing to hear us, but do not, because they are afraid of their people.

Thus much (though more might be said) by way of comparing our advantages in point of liberty. I am well pleased with my lot; if you are equally pleased with yours, I am glad of it. I write only on the defensive, I neither expect nor wish to alter your views. Enjoy your liberty; only allow me to enjoy and be thankful for mine.

I have now acquainted you with my two principal reasons for not being a Dissenter

The first concerned my conscience. For though my regard to the authority of the great Lord and Lawgiver of the church did not directly oblige me to unite with the Establishment, it discouraged me from uniting with any of the parties, who pretended an exclusive right from him to enforce their own particular church-forms. When conscience did not interfere, my second reason, though rather of a prudential kind, was of considerable weight with me. I loved liberty, and therefore gave a preference to the Church of England, believing I might in that situation exercise my ministry with the most freedom. I have made the experiment, and have no reason to repent of it. These points being cleared, my way was open to attend to another consideration which had a farther influence in determining my mind. This, I am about to offer to you as a third reason for my being where I am—*The probability of greater usefulness.* This probability, as to myself, and to others who can conform with a good conscience, seemed to lie on the side of the Establishment upon several accounts.

1. Great multitudes in this Christian nation (so called) are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion, inattentive to the worth and welfare of their souls, and lamentably destitute of the proper means of instruction. I hoped for opportunities in the Establishment of preaching to many who could not hear the Dissenters. The children of God, known to himself, are scattered abroad, far and wide. And as faith more usually comes by hearing, I admire his condescension and goodness in permitting his ministers to think differently on some external points, that they may with an upright heart serve him in the different departments of his vineyard. They who are Dissenters upon principle, would act against their judgments and consciences, were they to conform for the sake of usefulness. I am well content that they should remain as they are. But it has proved a mercy to thousands, that all who are called and qualified to preach the gospel, are not like-minded in this respect.

2. The spirit of bigotry and prejudice is too prevalent on all sides. As there are Dissenters who would think it sinful to be seen within the walls of a church, so there are other persons who place a principal part of their religion in an ignorant attachment to our forms, and could not easily be prevailed upon to enter within the doors of a meeting-house. But their prepossession in favour of our churches gives the minister who can conscientiously meet them there a great advantage *ad homines*, by confirming the truths of the gospel (which when first declared are generally disliked and opposed) from the tenor of our Liturgy and Articles, to which they profess some regard. A large part of our auditories, especially in places where the gospel is considered as a novelty, consists of persons of this description. But the Lord has been pleased in very many instances to honour our service amongst them with his blessing. By the power of his Spirit the truth is made manifest to their hearts, they are turned from darkness to light, and from the bondage of sin, to serve the living God. Then their former prejudices subside; insomuch that many, who once despised and hated the Dissenters, have been afterwards persuaded to join with them. The Dissenting interest would probably have been much weaker than it is at present, if it had not been strengthened by the accession of many church-members, and more than a few of your teachers and pastors, who had no inclination to hear your ministers, until they were first awakened under ours. The words of our Lord may in this sense be applied to many of your churches: "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into the fruits of their labours." The aim of my ministry, I trust, is not to promote the interests of a party, but to win souls to Christ. We have, however, the comfort, to find, that a number are not only called, but edified and established by the blessing of God on our preaching; and that many of the most judicious and spiritual of our people, are proof against the insinuations which prevail on some to forsake the Church of England in hopes of enjoying a purer and more acceptable worship among the Dissenters. As to those who do leave us, if they are truly benefited, if they really grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, in humility, meekness, benevolence, and deadness to the world, more among you, than they would have done amongst us, I can sincerely rejoice. But I think your brethren have no just reason to be either displeased or sorry, that God has raised up ministers to preach to thousands to whom they would never have had access.

3. I saw likewise, that the Lord had been pleased of late years to return by the power of his Spirit to the Church of England, which I believe many Dissenters thought he had so utterly forsaken that he would return no more. This leads me to a tender point, and I wish to touch upon it with great tenderness. We have none of us any thing to boast of. Our warmest exertions in the service of such a Master are far too cold; and our greatest success falls very short of what we ought to pray for. We preach no other gospel than you do. We love and respect many of your ministers for their knowledge, piety, and exemplary conversation. But I believe you will allow, that the general state of your churches at present, is not so lively and flourishing as it was in the days of the old non-conformists. I believe the best of your people were long ago sensible of a decline, that they sincerely lamented it, and earnestly prayed for a revival. Their prayers were at length answered, but not in the way they expected. A great and spread-

ing revival of religion took place, but the instruments were not Dissenters. At the time when I was ordained there was a considerable number of regular parochial ministers who preached the doctrines of the Reformation. The number has been greatly increased since, and is still increasing. I could not but judge, that the Lord's presence with his word in awakening sinners, and in applying it with power to the heart, was more evident and striking on this side, than on yours. Not because we are better than you; but because the work with us is rather new, whereas amongst you it is of an older date. The history of the Church of God and of human nature in past ages, teaches us to expect that revivals of religion will seldom stand long at their primitive height, but will gradually subside and degenerate, till things return in a course of time nearly to their former state; though a name, perhaps first imposed as a stigma by the world, and a form, which owed all its value to the spirit that once enlivened it, may still remain. I wish I could affirm that none who were otherwise competent judges of a revival, have been prevented by their prepossessions from rejoicing in what God has wrought amongst us. But I fear it has been otherwise, and that a spirit of prejudice and party discovered itself upon the occasion, which proved hurtful to some good men. When I think of the abilities and characters of some Dissenting ministers, I cannot but ascribe the little visible success they meet with, in some measure to their unwillingness to acknowledge a work of God in which they themselves were not employed. Their exceptions were not wholly groundless: A lively zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls, in persons whose judgments were not fully ripened by observation and experience, did not secure them from incidental mistakes and blemishes. These were easily seen and eagerly noticed. A desire of being free from the least suspicion of giving countenance to the unguarded, though well meant sallies of active spirits, seems to have led some of your ministers into a contrary extreme; and their public discourses, though solid and judicious compositions, lost that animation in delivery, which is in some degree necessary to engage attention, and to keep up an auditory. Thus, while preachers much inferior to them for learning and general knowledge in divinity have had crowded assemblies, the pleasure with which I have heard some of your most eminent ministers, has been often abated by observing that the number of the hearers has been much smaller than the number of pews in the place. I must therefore confess that one consideration which deterred me from joining the Dissenters was, a fear lest the love of peace, and a temper rather compliant, might insensibly betray me into an over cautious spirit, damp my zeal, or divert it into a wrong channel, and thereby pre ent the success at which I aimed. I rather chose to unite with those people whom I thought the most likely to maintain and encourage what little fervour I possessed; and where I saw the most evident tokens of a power from on high accompanying the public ministrations. And as I had my reasons likewise for not being an Itinerant, a regular and stated charge in the Established church engaged my preference.

My fourth reason (the last I think it necessary to mention) being rather a point of experience, must depend chiefly upon my own testimony, and therefore I need not enlarge much upon it. Superadded, however, to those which I have already stated, it greatly contributed to give full satisfaction to my mind: I mean, the proofs I had, that the Lord by the openings and leadings of his providence, pointed out to me the situation in which I was to serve him. The first explicit notice I gave of my desire to enter the ministry, was to an intimate friend in your denomination, nearly six years before I was ordained. In the course of this interval I made, and I received a variety of applications and proposals; but every thing failed, and every door by which I sought admission remained shut against me. I have already observed, that this state of suspense gave me leisure to examine the subject of church-government more closely, and that the result of my disquisitions was the gradual, and at length the complete removal of the difficulties and exceptions I had at first hastily imbibed against the Establishment. At length the Lord's time came; then obstacles apparently unsurmountable suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared. Then I learnt the reason of former disappointments. My way had been mercifully hedged up with thorns, to prevent me taking a wrong course, and to keep me waiting until the place and service of his own appointment were prepared and ready for me. The coincidence of many circumstances which I cannot explain to another, gave me a very comfortable sense of the Lord's guidance. I received ordination in the Church of England with a πληροφορια, with wind and tide (if I may so speak) in my favour, with the most pleasing disposition of outward events, and the most assured persuasion in my own mind, that I was following the call, and doing the will of God; of which I had at that time little more doubt than if an angel had been sent from heaven to tell me so. Nor have I hesitated upon the point a single hour from that day to this.

I think you will not be sorry to find I am drawing towards a close. Indeed I should be ashamed to have written so much merely on my own account. I began this ideal correspondence with you about seven years ago. More then the one half of it was then written in a few weeks; but I felt a reluctance to proceed, because it seemed to be so much my

own affair; but I have frequently thought since, that something upon the subject, written in a moderate and friendly spirit (which it has been my prayer and endeavour to preserve), might, by the Lord's blessing, be a mean of promoting candour and benevolence among those, who, whatever else they differ in, have one Lord, one faith, one hope. A desire of being instrumental in so good a work, has at length prevailed on me, to revise what I had begun, to add what I thought farther necessary for completing my design, and to send it abroad. I cannot give you particular reasons why I have not done it sooner, or why I do it now. Our times, plans, and purposes are under a superior guidance and direction, which it is our duty and our privilege always to acknowledge, though we cannot always distinctly discern it. I shall be happy if the event shall prove that I have been led to chuse the fittest time, and to offer a word in season. They who love and preach the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whatever name they bear among men, and whatever body of people they are united to, are engaged in one common cause; they are opposed by the same enemies; their severest conflicts and their sweetest comforts are derived from the same sources; and they will ere long meet in the same kingdom of glory, and join in the same songs of eternal praise, to him who sitteth upon the throne, and to him who redeemed us to God by his blood. How desirable then is it, that while we live here, we should be at peace amongst ourselves, and live in the spirit of that love (the only infallible mark of our being truly the servants of Christ), which seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, but beareth, hopeth, and believeth all things!

As what I write to you is to appear in print, I think it proper to add, for my own sake, that my whole intention will be fulfilled by the publication. I do not mean to enter into controversy; and therefore if these letters, contrary to my wish, should raise me an opponent, and give occasion to an answer, I shall not think myself bound to reply, unless I could be convicted of such a wilful misrepresentation, as would render it my duty to ask pardon of God, and of the Public.

I commend you and yours to the blessing of our Lord, and remain

Your affectionate Friend.

March 1, 1784.

A

PLAN

OF

ACADEMICAL PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

IN A

LETTER TO A FRIEND.

Quin et piorum mentibus mysteria,
Contempta pravis, impie sapientibus
Occulta, Dominus luce proferet sua,
Et sacrosancti fœderis scientiam
Docebit.———— BUCH. Ps. XXV.

The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable.
JAMES iii. 17.

A PLAN

OF

ACADEMICAL PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

DEAR SIR,

I AM not the son of a prophet, nor was I bred up among the prophets. I am quite a stranger to what passes within the walls of colleges and academies. I was as one born out of due time, and led, under the secret guidance of the Lord, by very unusual steps, to preach the faith which I once laboured to destroy. Since you know all this, how could you think of applying to me for the plan of an academical institution? Yet I confess the design you mentioned to me, in which some of your friends have thoughts of engaging, is so important in my view, that I am willing to come as near to your wishes as I can. I must not pretend to dictate a plan for the business which is now in contemplation. But if you will allow me to indulge a sort of reverie, and suppose myself a person of some consequence in Utopia, where I could have the modelling of every thing to my own mind; and that I was about to form an academy there, for the sole purpose of educating young men for the ministry of the gospel—in this way I am willing to offer you my thoughts upon the subject with great simplicity and freedom. And if any of the regulations of my imaginary academy should be judged applicable to your design, you and your friends will be heartily welcome to them.

I should then, *suppositis supponendis*, in the first place, lay down two or three important maxims, which I would hope never to lose sight of in the conduct of the affair: expecting that, if I should begin without them, I must stumble at the very threshold; and that whenever I should neglect them afterwards, all my care and labour, and expense would be from that time thrown away.

My first maxim is, That none but he who made the world can make a minister of the gospel. If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator. But a true minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.

I adopt as a second maxim, That the holy scriptures are both comprehensively and exclusively the grand treasury of all that knowledge which is requisite and sufficient, to make the minister, the man of God, thoroughly furnished for every branch of his office. If indeed no other studies were of subordinate importance, in order to a right understanding of the scriptures, and especially to those who are not only to know for themselves, but are appointed to teach others also; then academical instruction would be needless, and I might supply my young men with every thing at at once, by putting the Bible into their hands, and directing them to read it continually with attention and prayer. But my meaning is, that though there is such a concatenation in knowledge, that every branch of science may, by a judicious application, be rendered subservient to a minister's great design; yet no attainments in philology, philosophy, or in any or all the particulars which constitute the aggregate of what we call Learning, can in the least contribute to form a minister of the gospel, any farther than he is taught of God to refer them to, and to regulate them by the scriptures as a standard. On the contrary, the more a man is furnished with this kind of apparatus, unless the leading truths of scripture reign and flourish in his heart, he will be but the more qualified to perplex himself, and to mislead his hearers.

My third maxim is an inference from the two former: That the true gospel-minister who possesses these secondary advantages, though he may know the same things, and acquire his knowledge by the like methods, as other scholars do, yet he must know and possess them in a manner peculiar to himself. His criticisms, if he be a critic, will discover something which the greatest skill in grammatical niceties cannot of itself reach. If he be an orator, he will not speak in the artificial

self-applauding language of man's wisdom, but in simplicity and with authority; like one who feels the ground he stands upon, and knows to whom he belongs, and whom he serves. If he mentions a passage of history, it will not be to shew his reading, but to illustrate or prove his point; and it will be evident from his manner of speaking, that though he may have taken the facts from Tacitus or Robertson, his knowledge of the springs of human action, and of the superintendency of a divine providence, is derived from the word of God. And so of other instances.

In a word, if a young man was to consult me how he might be wise and learned in the usual sense of the words, I might advise him to repair to Oxford or Cambridge, or to twenty other places which I could name. But if I thought him really desirous of becoming wise to win souls, I would invite him to my new College in Utopia.

From these general observations I proceed more directly to my subject. You are then to suppose that I have taken my determination, and counted the cost, and am now sitting down to contrive my plan. As a little attention to method may not be amiss, I shall endeavour to range my thoughts under four principal heads, concerning,

1. The Place.
2. The Tutor.
3. The Pupils.
4. The Course of Education.

I. And first (as preachers sometimes say), of the first. If the metropolis of Utopia should be any thing like ours, there are obvious reasons to forbid my fixing upon a spot very near it. I think not nearer than a moderate day's journey. Nor would I wish it much farther distant. Occasional visits to a great city, where there are many considerable ministers and christians, should not be rendered impracticable; as they might furnish my young men with opportunities of forming connections and making observations that might contribute to their usefulness in future life. But *procul ab urbe* will be my maxim. I should not only fear lest they should be contaminated by the vices which too generally prevail where men live in a throng: if they escaped these, I should still have apprehensions, lest the notice that might be taken of them, and the respect shewn them by well-meaning friends, should imperceptibly seduce them into a spirit of self-importance, give them a turn for dress and company, and spoil that simplicity and dependence, without which I could have little hope of their success. I would wish it may be their grand aim to please the Lord, and under him and for his sake to please their tutor. They have as yet no business with other people. Their tutor must be to them *instar omnium*. Him they must love, reverence, and obey, and accurately watch his looks, and every intimation of his will. But to secure this point, or even to have a reasonable prospect of attaining it, methinks it seems necessary to say, *procul, procul ab urbe, juvenes!* But the difference between a rural and a town situation is so striking at first view, that I suppose it quite needless to say more upon this head. I therefore proceed,

II. To the choice of my Tutor.—Whoever he may be, when I have found him, and fixed him, I will take the liberty to tell him, that he is called to the most honourable and important office that man, in the present state of things, is capable of. The skilful and faithful tutor is not only useful to his pupils considered as individuals, but he is remotely the instrument of all the blessings and benefits which the Lord is pleased to communicate by their ministry, in the course of their stated and occasional labours to the end of life. On the other hand, the errors and prejudices of an incompetent tutor, adopted and perpetuated by his disciples, may produce a long progression of evil consequences, which may continue to operate and multiply when he and they are dead and forgotten. For if the streams which are to spread far and wide throughout a land are poisoned in the very source, who can foresee how far the mischief may be diffused. Unless, therefore, I can procure a proper tutor, I must give up my design. It is better the youth should remain untaught, than that they should be taught to do wrong.

And I seem not easily satisfied on this head. My idea of the person to whom I could cheerfully entrust the care of my academy, is not of an ordinary size. He seems to be one,

——Qualem nequeo monstrare, ac sentio tantum.

However, since we are upon Utopian ground, where we may imagine as largely as we please, I will attempt to delineate him. And were I to recommend a tutor to your friends, it should be the man who I thought came the nearest to the character I am about to describe.

For his first essential indispensable qualification, I require a mind deeply penetrated with a sense of the grace, glory, and efficacy of the gospel. However learned and able in other respects, he shall not have a single pupil from me, unless I have reason to believe, that his heart is attached to the person of the Redeemer as God-man: that as a sinner his whole dependence is upon the Redeemer's work of love, his obedience unto death, his intercession and mediatorial fulness. His sentiments must be clear and explicit respecting the depravity of human nature, and the necessity and reality of the agency of the Holy Spirit, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify, and seal those who, under his influence, are led to

Jesus for salvation. With respect to the different schemes or systems of Divinity which obtain amongst those who are united in the acknowledgment of the above fundamental truths, I should look for my tutor amongst those who are called Calvinists; but he must not be of a curious metaphysical disputatious turn, a mere system-monger or party-zealot. I seek for one who, having been himself taught the deep things of God by the Holy Spirit, in a gradual experimental manner; while he is charmed with the beautiful harmony and coincidence of all the doctrines of grace, is at the same time aware of the mysterious depths of the divine counsels, and the impossibility of their being fully comprehended by our feeble understandings. Such a man will be patient and temperate in explaining the peculiarities of the gospel to his pupils, and will wisely adapt himself to their several states, attainments, and capacities. After the example of the Great Teacher, he will consider what they can bear, and aim to lead them forward step by step, in such a manner, that the sentiments he instils into them may be their own, and not taken up merely upon the authority of his *ipse dixit*. He will propose the scripture to them as a consistent whole; and guard them against the extremes into which controversial writers have forced themselves and each other, in support of a favourite hypothesis, so as, under pretence of honouring some parts of the word of God, to overlook, if not to contradict, what is taught with equal clearness in other parts.

I wish my pupils to be well versed in useful learning, and therefore my tutor must be a learned man. He must not only be able to teach them whatever is needful for them to learn, but should be possessed of such a fund, as that the most forward and most promising among them may feel he has a decided superiority over them in every part of their studies. Besides an accurate skill in the school classics, he should be well acquainted with books at large, and possessed of a general knowledge of the state of literature and religion, and the memorable events of history in the successive ages of mankind. Particularly, he should be well versed in Ecclesiastical learning: for though it be true, that the bulk of it is little worth knowing for its own sake, yet a man of genius and wisdom will draw from the whole mass a variety of observations suited to assist young minds in forming a right judgment of human nature, of true religion, of its counterfeits, and of the abuses to which the name of religion is capable of being perverted. And he will likewise be able to select for their use, such authors and subjects as deserve their notice, from the surrounding rubbish in which they are almost buried.

My tutor should likewise be competently acquainted with the lighter accomplishments, which are usually understood by the term *Belles Lettres*, and a proper judge of them with respect both to their intrinsic and their relative value. Their intrinsic value to creatures who are posting to eternity is not great; and a wise man if he has not been tinctured with them in early life, will seldom think it worth his while to attend much to them afterwards. Yet in such an age as ours, it is some disadvantage to a man in public life, if he is quite a stranger to them. To a tutor they are in a manner necessary. It is farther desirable that he should have a lively imagination, under the direction of a sound judgment and a correct and cultivated taste. Otherwise, how can he assist and form the taste and judgment of his pupils, or direct or criticise their compositions?

Natural Philosophy is not only a noble science, but one which offers the most interesting and profitable relaxations from the weight of severer studies. If the tutor be not possessed of this, he will lose a thousand opportunities of pointing out to his pupils the signatures of wisdom, power, and goodness, which the wonder-working God has impressed upon every part of the visible creation But at the same time, he should know where to stop, and what bounds to set to their inquiries. It is not necessary that either he or they should be numbered amongst the first astronomers or virtuosi of the age. A life devoted to the service of God and souls, will not afford leisure for this diminutive kind of pre-eminence. A general knowledge will suffice even in the tutor. And when he lectures upon these subjects, he will caution them against spending too much time and thought upon those branches of philosophy which have but a very remote tendency to qualify them for preaching the gospel. They are sent into the world and into the academy, not to collect shells, and fossils, and butterflies, or to surprise each other with feats of electricity, but to win souls for Christ.

Perhaps I have said enough of my tutor's knowledge, and may now consider him with regard to his spirit, his methods of communicating what he knows to his pupils, and his manner of living with them as a father with his children.

He must be *didacticos*, apt to teach. A man may know much, yet not have a facility of imparting his ideas. It is a talent and a gift of God, and therefore will always be found in some good degree in the person who is called of God to the tutor's office.

He will consider himself as a teacher, not only in the lecture-room, but in all places, and at all times, whether sitting in the house, or walking by the way, if any of his pupils are with him. And he will love to have them always about him, so far as their studies and his own necessary avocations will admit.

Two things he will aim to secure from them, reverence and affection. Without main

taining a steady authority, he can do nothing; and unless they love him, every thing will go on heavily. But if the pupils are properly chosen, such a man as I have described will be both loved and feared. His spiritual and exemplary deportment, his wisdom and abilities, will command their respect. His condescension and gentleness, his tenderness for their personal concerns, his assiduity in promoting their comfort, and doing them every friendly office in his power, will engage their love. These happy effects will be farther promoted by their frequent mutual intercourse in prayer, by his expository lectures, and by his public ministry, if he be a preacher. Having his eye unto the Lord, and his heart in his work, a blessing from on high shall descend upon him and upon his house.

As human nature is the same in all places, it is probable that the christians in Utopia may be divided among themselves with respect to rituals and modes of worship, in some such manner as we see and feel amongst us. Now here, as in every thing else, I would have my tutor a sort of phœnix, a man of a generous enlarged spirit, a real friend of that liberty wherewith Jesus has made his people free from the shackles and impositions of men. One who uniformly judges and acts upon that grand principle of the New Testament, which is likewise a plain and obvious maxim of common sense; I mean, that the Lord of all, the Head of the church, is the alone Lord and Judge of conscience. I suppose my tutor has already taken his side, that he is either in the Establishment (if there be one in Utopia) or of course a Dissenter from it. And, really as to my scheme, I am indifferent which side he has taken; we shall not have a minute's debate about it, provided he acts consistently with the principles which I have assigned him. But as I myself, living in England, am of the Established Church, that you may not suspect me of partiality, I will suppose, and am ready to take it for granted, that he will be found to be a Utopian Dissenter.

On this supposition, my imagination takes a flight, hastens into the midst of things, and anticipates as present what is yet future. Methinks I see the tutor indulging his scholars (as at proper seasons he often will) with an hour of free conversation; and from some question proposed to him concerning the comparative excellence or authority of different forms of church-government, taking occasion to open his mind to them, something in the following manner:

"My dear children, you may have observed, that, when in the course of our lectures, I have been led to touch upon this subject, it has not been my custom to speak in a dogmatical style. I have sometimes intimated to you, that though every part of the Levitical worship was of positive divine institution, yet when the people rested and trusted in their external forms, the Lord speaks as abhorring his own appointments. I have told you, upon the apostle's authority, that the kingdom of God consists not in meats and drinks, in names and forms, but in righteousness peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Amidst the many divisions and subdivisions which obtain in the visible Church, there are in reality but two sorts of people, the children of God, and the children of the world. The former sort, though partakers in one life and in one hope, yet living in successive ages, in various countries, under very different modes of government, education, and customs, it seems morally impossible that they should all agree, as by instinct, in one common mode of social worship. It is indeed said, that there is a plan prescribed in the New Testament to which all ought to conform as nearly as possible. All parties say this in favour of their own plans; and men eminent for wisdom and holiness are to be found among the advocates for each. But is it not strange, that if the Lord has appointed such a standard, the wisest and best of his people should differ so widely in their views of it, and deviate so far from each other when they attempt to reduce it to practice? Let others dispute, but as for you my children, and me, let us rather adore the wisdom and goodness of our Lord. He who knew the heart of man, the almost invincible power of local prejudices, and what innumerable circumstances in different periods and places would render it impracticable for his people to tread exactly in the same line, has provided accordingly. The rules and lights he has afforded us respecting the outward administration of his Church, are recorded with such a latitude, that his true worshippers may conscientiously hope they are acceptable to him, though the plans which they believe to be consistent with his revealed will, are far from corresponding with each other. It is sufficient that the apostolical canons, Let all things be done decently and in order, to edification and in charity, are universally binding; and were these on all sides attended to, smaller differences would be very supportable.

"I have often pointed out to you the wonderful analogy which the Lord has established in many instances, between his works in the outward creation, and in his kingdom of grace. Perhaps the variety observable in the former may be one instance of this kind. When you see every vegetable arrayed in green exactly of the same shade, or all tulips variegated in the same manner, as if painted from one common pattern, then, and not before, expect to find true believers agreed in their views and practice respecting the modes of religion.

"Study therefore the scriptures, my children, with humble prayer, that the Lord may

give you such views of these concerns, as may fit you for the stations and services to which his providence may lead you. See with your own eyes, and judge for yourselves. This is your right. One is your master, even Christ, and you need not, you ought not to call any man master upon earth. But be content with this. Do not arrogate to yourselves the power of judging for others. Be willing that they should see with their own eyes likewise. The Papists, upon the ground of the assumed infallibility of their church, are at least consistent with themselves in condemning all who differ from them. Protestants confess themselves fallible, yet speak the same peremptory language.

"As to myself, if I had thought it preferable upon the whole to be a minister in our Established Church, I might probably have been one; but I trust I am where the Lord would have me to be, and I am satisfied. My desire for you is to see you able ministers of the New Testament. As to the part of the vineyard in which you are to labour, wait simply upon the Lord, and he in good time will point it out to you. If scripture and conscience lead you to prefer the Dissenting line, I shall say, It is well—provided you embrace it with a liberal spirit, and have a better warrant for your choice than merely the example of your tutor. Should you determine otherwise, I shall still say, It is well—provided I see you disinterested, humble, and faithful. Your being educated under my roof is a circumstance not likely to facilitate your admission into the Establishment; but if the Lord in his providence should open to any of you a door on that side, and incline you to enter, I shall not dissuade you from it, as though I thought it sinful. I shall only wish you to attend to that advice which cannot mislead you:—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path."

Thus far my tutor.—Or, since I am in a supposing humour, if you will give me leave to make one supposition more, that it is possible there may be Methodists and Itinerants in Utopia, as we have in England; he would then perhaps continue his discourse a little longer as follows:

"Though the pastoral care of a single congregation is the service which the Lord has allotted me, and I have not seen it my duty to engage in any thing which might lead me long or far from the people to whom I am related, I am no enemy to itinerant preaching. My Lord and Saviour himself, his apostles and first servants were all Itinerants; and I believe that houses and ships, hills and plains, the side of a river, or the sea-shore, are all fit places for preaching the gospel, and sufficiently authorized as such by the highest precedents. I cannot therefore censure, much less condemn, a practice which the scripture warrants, and to which I doubt not the Lord has given abundant testimony in our own times, by making the word thus dispensed effectual to the conversion and consolation of many souls. I believe indeed that some persons not duly acquainted with their own hearts, nor with what is requisite to constitute a preacher, have too hastily supposed themselves called to preach the gospel; when the event has proved that the Lord had neither called them to his service nor furnished them for it. And I think, if it should generally be allowed that young men are proper judges in their own cause, and have a right to commence preachers when or where or how they please, without the advice or approbation of ministers more experienced than themselves, many inconveniencies may and must follow. I could wish every young man to be so impressed with the force of the apostle's question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" that he should rather need invitation and encouragement to preach, than be disposed to run hastily into the work, as the horse rusheth into the battle. But I must not expect every thing will be managed according to my wish. I have mourned over the miscarriages of some Itinerant preachers, but I have been much comforted by the good conduct and success of others. It is neither my business nor my intention to persuade you to this course: but if, when you are properly instructed and qualified for the ministry, I should see any of you disposed to go forth in the Itinerant way, should I be satisfied of your principles and motives, and have reason to hope your zeal was tempered with humility, I know not that I durst refuse my consent. For, as I have often told you, the honour of my Lord and Saviour, and the welfare of precious souls, are far dearer to me than the detached interests of any party; and if Christ be faithfully and successfully preached, in whatever way, and by whatever instruments he is pleased to work, "I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

I think what I have said of the tutor, and what he has just now said for himself, may suffice to give you an idea of the person I would chuse, and that it is now time to consider,

III. The choice of Pupils.—I would have them all resident with the tutor, and therefore their number at one time can be but small; especially as I should wish him to undertake every branch of their education. He might have an assistant to teach the rudiments of the languages, a service that would otherwise take up much of the time which he could better employ, but he must do all the rest himself. I suppose therefore that ten, or at the most twelve pupils will be a sufficient number to be under his care at once. The man I have described would not be mercenary, but the labourer is worthy of his reward. As I shall

find him work enough to take up his whole time, his pay ought to be competent and liberal; and, as I have supposed myself rich enough to execute my plan in what manner I please, I hope I shall not starve my tutor, nor put his economical talents on the stretch to contrive how to squeeze and save a pittance out of the sum allotted for their board. I would fix the boarding upon equitable and moderate terms distinct from his salary, which should be handsome, and always the same, whether he had one pupil with him, or ten, or twelve. It would be my part to keep the number up, but if I neglect it, he should be no loser; nor ought he to be dependent upon my caprice or negligence, but he should stand upon an easy and settled footing, so as to be free, not only from want, but from anxious care, that he might be able to attend his business without distraction.

And now my house is ready, where shall I find young men to fill it? I must look around me, and request my friends to look out for me. When I have found two I will send them, and the rest as they offer. Perhaps it would be one of the chief difficulties attending my scheme, to collect ten or twelve youths worthy of such a tutor.

They must be serious. I mean they must have an awakened, experimental sense of the truth and goodness of the gospel. This is a point not easily ascertained, especially in young persons. There is often a something that resembles it, which, upon trial, does not prove satisfactory. However, my part will be to look to the Lord for guidance, and then judge as well as I can. But I hope no persuasion or recommendation, no desire of pleasing or obliging a friend, would prevail on me to admit one who I did not verily believe was a subject of the grace of God. Who would undertake to teach a parrot algebra? Yet this would be as practicable as to make those able and faithful preachers, whom the Lord has not first made christians.

They must likewise have capacity. It is not necessary that their abilities should be of the first rate (perhaps but few of such are called); but some tolerable measure of natural abilities, capable of being opened and improved by education, seems almost necessary in the person who aims to be a minister of the gospel. At least it will be necessary upon my plan; for as my tutor cannot take many, I must give the preference to such as may both do him credit by their proficiency under his care, and be qualified to profit others when they leave him.

Ex quovis ligno Mercurius non fit.

If the heart be changed and sanctified by grace, a person of the weakest natural understanding will acquire, under divine teaching, all that is necessary to enable him to fill up his station in private life with propriety, to overcome the world, and to make his own calling and election sure. But a preacher must have gifts as well as grace, to be able to divide the word of truth as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. And therefore, though the Lord was once pleased by a dumb ass to rebuke the foolishness of a prophet, I am not forward to acknowledge those as ambassadors sent by him (however well-meaning they may be) who seem either to have no message to deliver, or no ability to deliver it.

I would likewise be satisfied, as much as possible, concerning the views and motives which make them desirous of devoting themselves to the ministry. Some desires of this kind are very frequently found in young converts. When a sense of eternal things is new and lively upon their minds, and they look round upon a world lying in wickedness, they are much affected. The obligations they feel to the Redeemer, a grief that he should be so little known, so little loved, and a compassion for their fellow sinners, whom they see liable to perish for lack of knowledge, make them often long to be employed, and sometimes constrain them to run before they are sent. But if they are not really designed by the Lord for this service, either their desires towards it gradually subside, and they yield themselves to his appointment in other paths of life; or, if they unadvisedly venture upon it, they are seldom either comfortable or useful. They soon feel themselves unequal to the work; or, if self-conceit prevents them from feeling it, their hearers at least are very sensible of it. They often mistake error for truth. They retail scraps and shreds of sentiments which they pick up from others, and, for want of judgment, misapply them. Thus hypocrites are encouraged, and those whom the Lord would have comforted are made sad. They think that preaching with power consists in vociferation and distorted attitudes; and that to utter every thing that comes upon their minds, without end or side (as we say), without any regard to text, context, occasion, or connection, is to preach extempore. Too often Satan gains open advantage over them: they are puffed up with pride, taken in snares, and perhaps fall into such woeful miscarriages as at length ruin their characters, and stop their mouths. It is therefore of great importance to be workers together with the Lord in this business; to chuse those whom he chuses, to bring forward those whom he is preparing, and, if possible, none but these. We cannot indeed know the heart; but we may be wary and circumspect in judging by such lights as we can procure, and we ought to be so. Perhaps, after all, we may be mistaken in some instances; but, if we have done our best, we have done well, and shall not be blameable for such consequences as we could not possibly foresee or prevent. If a candidate for the academy appears to be of a self-diffident and

humble spirit, to have some acquaintance with his own heart, a tolerable capacity, a turn for application, and an unblameable character, as to his personal conduct, I shall be disposed to admit him. But I would leave the final decision of his fitness to the tutor. For which purpose, it may be proper that he should be under the tutor's eye, for a limited time, as a probationer.

IV. The next point I am to consider is, the Course of Study they should pursue.—Though I am rather inclined to give this up absolutely and without reserve to the tutor, who, if he answers my description, must be the most proper person to institute a plan for himself, and would have no need of my assistance. But if his humility and his good opinion of me should lead him to desire my advice, he shall have it. I do not mean as to little circumstantials, but I would submit to him in a general and miscellaneous way such hints as may occur to me upon the subject. And I submit them to you beforehand.

A few things may be previously noticed, which, though they do not properly belong to their academical studies, are well worthy of attention.

A minister is a soldier of Jesus Christ, and, as such, is to expect and endure hardship. It is well to have this in our eye in the education of young men. They are not called to be gentlemen, but soldiers; not to live delicately, but to prepare for hardship. They should therefore be advised and accustomed to prefer a plain and frugal manner of life, and to avoid multiplying those wants which luxury and folly would prompt us to multiply almost *ad infinitum*. A propensity to indulgence either in the quantity or quality of food, is a meanness unworthy of a man, still more unsuitable to the character of a christian, and scandalous in a minister. I am no advocate for a monkish austerity, or a scrupulous, superstitious self-denial, which will almost starve the body to feed the pride of the heart. It is however very desirable to possess in early life, a habit of temperance, a mastery over appetite, and a resolute guard against every thing that has a tendency to blunt the activity of the spirits. And youth is the proper season for gaining this mastery, which if the golden opportunity be then lost, is seldom thoroughly acquired afterwards.

A propriety in dress should also be consulted. Neatness is commendable; but a student of divinity should keep at a distance from the air and appearance of a fop. A finical disposition in this article not only occasions a waste of time and expense, but is a token of a trifling turn of mind, and exposes the fine self-admiring youth, to the contempt or pity of the wise and good.

Farther, a habit of rising early should be resolutely formed. It redeems much time, and chiefly of those hours which are most favourable to study or devotion. It likewise cuts off the temptation to sitting up late, a hurtful and preposterous custom, which many students unwarily give unto, and which they cannot so easily break, when the bad effects of it upon their health convince them too late of their imprudence.

Let them be guarded against the snares attending a large acquaintance, and unnecessary visiting. The tutor will doubtless maintain authority and good discipline in his house, and not suffer any of his pupils to be absent from family-worship, nor abroad after a fixed hour, without his express permission, which should not be given but for solid and just reasons. And he cannot be too careful, both by advice and vigilance, to prevent them from forming any female connections while under his roof, however honourable the views or deserving the person may be. Love and courtship are by no means favourable to study, nor indeed to devotion, at a time when their present engagements, and the uncertainty of their prospects in future life, render a settlement by marriage improper, if not impracticable.

Much study is a weariness to the flesh, and the body and the mind are so nearly connected, that what affects the one will have an influence upon the other. Relaxation and exercise are therefore necessary at proper seasons, for those who wish to preserve cheerfulness and strength for service, and not to become old and disabled, through lowness of spirits, infirmities, and pains, before old age actually overtakes them. Riding is a manly, unexceptionable exercise, where it can be conveniently practised. But walking is, I suppose, equally healthful, and requires neither expense nor preparation. That the students may have an object in view when they go from home, the tutor will probably point out to them some of the Lord's poor, who live at convenient distances, whom they may visit, and comfort with their sympathy, advice, and prayers, as well as administer to the relief of their necessities, according to their ability. Thus while they are consulting their own health, they may at the same time imitate Him, who went about doing good. And in such visits they may meet with many hints from poor believers, concerning the Lord's wisdom and faithfulness in his dealings with them, and of the power of true religion, to confirm what they read upon these subjects, and probably some hints which their books will not supply them with. Farther, if, when they are abroad together, they will attempt such conversation as warmed the hearts of the disciples when walking to Emmaus, and if, when alone, they adopt the pattern of Isaac, who went out into the fields to meditate, then all the time they can thus employ may be set down to the account of their studies, for few of their hours can be more profitably improved.

But what, and how, are they to study? The answer to this question depends upon another: What is the object of their studies? It is to make them not merely scholars, but ministers, thoroughly furnished for their office. The particulars I aim at in placing them with my tutor are such as follow:

1. An orderly, connected, and comprehensive knowledge of the common places and topics of divinity, considered as a whole; a system of truth, of which the holy scripture is the sole fountain, treasury, and standard.

2. A competent acquaintance with sacred literature, by which I mean such writings, ancient and modern, as are helpful to explain or elucidate difficulties in scripture, arising from the phraseology, from allusion to customs and events not generally known, and from similar causes, and which therefore cannot be well understood without such assistance.

3. Such a general knowledge of philosophy, history, and other branches of polite literature, as may increase the stock of their ideas, afford them just conceptions of the state of things around them, furnish them with a fund for variety, enlargement, and illustration, that they may be able to enliven and diversify their discourses, which, without such a fund, will be soon apt to run in a beaten track, and to contain little more than a repetition of the same leading thoughts, without originality or spirit.

4. An ability to methodize, combine, distinguish, and distribute the ideas thus collected by study, so as readily to know what is properly adapted to the several subjects to be treated of, and to the several parts of the same subject. When the pupils are thus far accomplished, then I shall hope,

5. That they will in good time be able to preach extempore. I do not mean without forethought or plan, but without a book, and without the excessive labour of committing their discourses to memory. This ability of speaking to an auditory in a pertinent and collected manner, with freedom and decorum, with fidelity and tenderness, looking at them instead of looking at a paper, gives a preacher a considerable advantage, and has a peculiar tendency to command and engage the attention. It likewise saves much time, which might be usefully employed in visiting his people. It is undoubtedly a gift of God, but like many other gifts, to be sought, not only by prayer, but in the use of means. The first essays will ordinarily be weak and imperfect; but the facility increases, till at length a habit is formed, by diligence and perseverance. I should not think my academy complete, unless my tutor was attentive to form his pupils to the character of public speakers.

General rules admit of exceptions. I have myself known persons, who, with plain sense, true humility, and a spirit devoted to the Lord, and dependent upon him, have, with little or no assistance from men, proved solid, exemplary, and useful ministers. Such instances convince me, that however expedient learning may be, it is not indispensably necessary for a minister, especially for one who is to labour in a retired situation, and amongst plain unlettered hearers. I would not therefore preclude my tutor from all opportunity of being useful to persons of this description, who would be glad of such helps from him as they might receive in their mother-tongue, when the time of life, or particular circumstances might render the study of languages and science inconvenient. And, in general, as the capacities, dispositions, and prospects of a number of pupils would of course be different, I should leave it to his discretion to conduct them to the same grand ends of service, by such difference of method as he should judge most suitable to each; so as not to discourage or over-burden the truly deserving, nor to permit (if it can be prevented) the more studious and successful, to set too high a value upon their superior accomplishments. For after all it must be owned, and ought to be remembered, that grace and divine wisdom are of unspeakably greater importance, than scholastic attainments without them. We are sure, that though a man had the knowledge of all mysteries, the gifts of tongues and miracles, and the powers of an angel, if he has not likewise humility, spirituality, and love, he is in the sight of God but as sounding brass or a noisy cymbal. He may answer the purpose of a church-bell to call a congregation together, but has little prospect of doing them good when they are assembled.

But to return to my professed students, and,

First, As to the study of Theology.—How far it may be expedient to adopt some system or body of Divinity as a text or ground whereon to proceed, I am not quite determined; and which of these learned summaries is the best, I shall not attempt to decide till I have read them all. My tutor will have more of this knowledge; I shall therefore refer the choice, if it be necessary to choose one, to him. Calvin, Turretine, Witsius, and Ridgely, are those with which I have formerly been most acquainted. But indeed, of these, at present, I can remember little more than that I have read them, or the greatest part of them. I recollect just enough to say, that though I approve and admire them all, I have at the same time my particular objections to them all, as to this use of them. The Bible is my body of Divinity; and were I a tutor myself, I believe I should prefer the epistles of St. Paul as a summary, to any human systems I have seen, especially his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, the Hebrews, and Timothy. There are few uninspired writings, however excellent in the main, but bear some marks of the

infirmities, attachments, and prepossessions, which in a greater or less degree are inseparable from the present state of human nature. I would have my pupils draw their knowledge as immediately from the fountain-head as possible. I care not how extensive and various their reading of good authors may be under their tutor's eye: the more so the better. He will improve the differences they will find among learned and spiritual men, into an argument to engage them to study the scripture more closely, and to bring every debated sentiment to be tried and finally determined by that unerring standard. He will teach them to collect the detached portions of truth wherever they meet with them; to borrow from all, but to give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of none. For I know no author who is worthy the honour of being followed absolutely and without reserve.

I am told (for I know nothing of academies but from hearsay) that it is customary for pupils to write after the tutor, who reads his lecture. If I should adopt this custom I would not confine myself to it. Such written lectures, if well executed, must be good patterns to form the students to closeness in method and style. But I should likewise wish the tutor to give them unpremeditated lectures. Great masters of music (it is said) frequently feel an impetus in extempore playing, which enables them to execute off hand such strains as they wish to repeat, but cannot; their taste assuring them, that they are superior in kind to what they can ordinarily attain when they study and compose by rule. Thus a tutor who thoroughly understands his subject, and speaks from the fulness of his heart, will, now and then at least, feel a happy moment, when he will seem to possess new powers. His thoughts and expressions at such a time will have a peculiar precision and force, and will possibly illuminate and affect his hearers more than his regular and written lectures. When he has done speaking, let the pupils retire and commit to writing what they can recollect of such discourses, keeping to his method, but using their own expressions. These exercises would engage their attention, employ their invention and ingenuity, accustom them to consider the same subjects in different lights, and contribute to make the knowledge they derive from him, more their own, than by being always confined to transcribe line by line what was read to them.

I would not have the pupils put upon the needless and hurtful attempt of proving first principles. May not a man read lectures upon optics without previously proving the existence of the sun? My tutor will not coldly lay before his students the arguments *pro* and *con*, and then leave them to decide as evidence to them appears, whether there be a God, or whether the scriptures be of divine inspiration or not. So likewise with respect to the different sentiments on the primary points of scripture, as whether the Saviour be man or angel, or God manifest in the flesh; or, concerning the different acceptations of the words Depravity, Guilt, Faith, Grace, Atonement, and the like —he will speak with a becoming confidence and certainty on which side the truth lies. He will indeed furnish them with solid confutations of error from scripture and experience, but he will take care to let them know that these things are already settled; and proposed to them, not as candidates for their good opinion, but as truths which demand and deserve their attention. My tutor will not dogmatize, and expect them to adopt his opinions without any better reason than because they are his. He will endeavour to throw every light he is master of upon the subject, but at the same time he will speak as a teacher, not as an enquirer; as one who speaks that which he has known, and testifies that which he has seen.—He will not attempt to fill their head with a detail of all the cavils which pride and sophistry have started against the truths of God; nor so flatter his pupils, as to suppose them competent judges when they have weighed and compared the several argumentations. But he will rather warn them of their natural bias to the erroneous side, and guard them against the arts of those, who with fair words and fine speeches beguile the unprincipled and unwary. A tutor is a guide, and if worthy of his office, must be able to say, without hesitation: "This is the way, walk ye in it." Should he be seduced, by the specious sounds of candour and freedom of inquiry, to take the opposite method, and think it his duty to puzzle his scholars with all the waking dreams, objections, and evasions by which men reputed wise have opposed the simplicity of the faith once delivered to the saints, I should fear they would be more likely to turn out sceptics than ministers of the gospel.

Nor should he, with my consent, lay down a scheme of what is commonly called Natural Religion, as a substratum whereon to build a Religion of Divine Revelation. It is needful that he should give his pupils a just idea of the religion of fallen nature; but he will remind them that the few valuable sentiments occasionally found in the writings of the heathen philosophers and moralists were not their own. They are all represented as having travelled for their knowledge, and all in the same route, into Phœnicia or Egypt, into the neighbourhood of the only people who at that time were favoured with the oracles of God: and may therefore be justly supposed to have derived the detached particles of truth they acquired, from that people, either by immediate converse with them, or from their inspired books; especially from the time they were translated into the Greek language. He will point out to them the strong probability that

Epictetus and the later philosophers were equally or more indebted to the Christians and the New Testament. With respect to the sceptical moralists and reasoners of modern times, the proof will be still clearer and stronger, that their best notions are borrowed from the religion they attempt to depreciate. My tutor, in order to satisfy them how far the powers of unassisted fallen nature can proceed in the investigation of religious and moral truths, will set before them the progress which has actually been made in this way by the negroes in Africa or the American Indians. With such a picture of natural religion in their view, I should hope they would be led most cordially to praise God for the inestimable gift of his Holy Word, without the help of which the boasted light of nature is darkness that may be felt.

In my academy I would have no formal disputations upon points of divinity. If it be necessary to sharpen or exercise their wits by disputing, to which under proper regulations I should not object, there are topics in abundance at hand. Let them dispute, if they please, for or against the motion of the earth. Let them determine whether Cæsar or Pompey was the better man; or, in what respects Cato, who chose to die rather than venture to look Cæsar in the face, discovered more fortitude or true greatness of mind, than the slave who elopes from his master for fear of the lash. Let them contend whether learning has upon the whole been productive of most good, or of most mischief, to mankind. My tutor can supply them with a thousand questions of this kind. But to set a young man to put his ingenuity to the stretch, either to maintain a gross error, or to oppose a known and important truth, is in my view not only dangerous, but little less than a species of profaneness. What must the holy angels, who with humble admiration contemplate the wisdom and glory of God displayed in the gospel, what must they think of the arrogance of sinful worms, who presume so far to trifle with the doctrines and mysteries he has revealed, as to degrade them into subjects for school exercise and logical prize-fighting? Can it be possible to maintain a spirit of reverence and dependence amidst the noise of such malapert discussions? And if the youth to whom the wrong side of the question is committed, should by superior address nonplus and silence his antagonist; my heart would be in pain for him, lest he should from that moment be prejudiced against the truth which he had insulted with success; and think it really indefensible, because the other was not able to defend it.

Having been so long on the first article, I must endeavour to be more brief on those which follow.

Secondly, By sacred literature I chiefly mean Philology, Criticism, and Antiquities, so far as they are employed in the illustration of scripture. In these studies, if there be a proper application in the pupils, little more will be needful on the tutor's part, than to put suitable books into their hands, to superintend their progress, and to obviate difficulties they may meet with. I would wish them not only to read the scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek originals, but to be tolerable masters of the construction in both languages. This attainment is certainly not necessary to a minister; but they who apply themselves to the study of divinity in early life, will have time enough to acquire it, and the acquisition will be well worth their labour. If not necessary, it will be found very expedient and useful, and when the difficulties of the first entrance and rudiments are surmounted, will be very pleasant. The tutor will then enliven their study and facilitate their advance, by reading a chapter with them in each Testament daily or frequently, intermingling critical or expository strictures as he goes along. And he will probably furnish those students who have taste, with Dr Lowth's *Prælectiones de Poësi Hebræa*, which will enable them to judge of the style and idiom of the Hebrew Bible, and particularly of the style and beauties of the Hebrew poetry. Blackwall's Sacred Classics may be added for the Greek.

Since the learned have of late years condescended to lay open the way to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, by publishing Lexicons, Grammars, and other helps in the English tongue, the knowledge of the Latin is less needful to a Bible student than it was formerly. But as there are many valuable books in Latin and not yet translated, I must wish our pupils so far acquainted with the Latin language as to be able to read good authors in it. But as they are not to preach in Latin, an accurate skill is hardly worth their attempting, unless they have had a classical school education before they come to the academy. The mind is incapable of too many acquisitions: life is short, and more important business awaits them, in subserviency to which every thing else must be conducted.

Books of criticism and on scripture-antiquities are at hand in plenty. It will be impossible to read them all. The selection belongs not to me, but to the tutor. The *Synopsis Criticorum*, Godwin and Jennings, will perhaps be of the number he will chuse. A good Ecclesiastical History seems to be still a desideratum. A mass of materials, so far as it goes, is already prepared in the Magdeburg Centuriators, which affords a striking monument of the compiler's patience; but it would likewise require some patience in the reader who should undertake to go through it. Mosheim is perhaps the best book we have upon the subject, if the reader knows so much of himself and of the work of grace, as to prevent him from being misled by him, when treating on subjects which he does not appear

to have rightly understood. But as to facts, I believe he is in general worthy of credit. Bingham's Antiquities may deserve inspection, if it be only to shew how soon and how generally the beautiful simplicity of the gospel was corrupted by those who professed it. Dupin and Dr Cave's *Historia Literaria Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum* are still more valuable; but the characters of the writers, and their strong prepossessions in favour of antiquity, should be known and allowed for.

Thirdly, Much time cannot be allowed in our academy for the pursuit of polite literature. But an entrance may be made, and a relish for it acquired, under the direction and restraint of the tutor, which may provide the students with a profitable amusement for leisure hours in future life; for in this knowledge they may advance from year to year. A perusal of such books as Rollin on the Belles Lettres, Bossuet's Universal History, Derham and Ray on the Creation, and a few of our best poets, may suffice while they are students. Other books will occasionally come in their way; for the tutor should have a well-chosen library for the accommodation of his pupils; but he will guard them against spending too much time in this line of reading. For though it has its subordinate advantages, it may, if too much indulged, divert them from the main point. And they should be taught to refer every thing they read to the principles of scripture, to the knowledge of the heart of man, and the works, the ways, the wisdom, and providence of God, otherwise reading will only tend to make them wise in their own conceit. I make short work with this article, and hasten to consider,

Fourthly, What may be helpful (by the divine blessing) to enable the pupils to communicate the fruits of their knowledge to advantage in the public ministry, that they may appear workmen that need not be ashamed. For this, as I have formerly intimated, their chief and immediate dependence must be on the Lord. He alone can give them a mouth and wisdom for his service; and without the unction from on high, the study of divinity and every thing relative to it, will be but like learning the art of navigation on shore, which is very different from the knowledge necessary to the mariner, who is actually called to traverse the ocean. But dependence upon the Lord should be no discouragement to the use of means.

I would have my students good logicians. The logic of the schools is in a great measure a cramp, forced, and formal affair, and may possibly have made almost as many pedants and sophists as good reasoners. But Dr Watts has furnished us with a system of logic in a more intelligible and amiable form, and divested it of the solemn impertinencies with which it was encumbered. As the rules of grammar are themselves drawn from the language they are designed to regulate, so good logic is no more than the result of observations upon the powers of the human mind: and thus we see, that many people of plain sense are passable logicians, though they never saw a book upon the subject, and perhaps do not understand the meaning of the term. But they may be much assisted in the habits of thinking, judging, and reasoning, and in disposing their thoughts in an advantageous method, by rules judiciously formed and arranged. In this view I judge Dr Watts's logic, with his subsequent treatise on the Improvement of the Mind, to be very valuable. And, together with the more scientific part of the subject, he will provide my pupils with a great variety of hints for their conduct, and for distinguishing the principles and conduct of others. These books should be frequently read, and closely studied, and will afford the tutor an extensive scope for their instruction. Unless a man can conceive and define his subject clearly, distinguish and enumerate the several parts, and knows how to cast them into a convenient order and dependence, he cannot be a masterly preacher. And though a good understanding may supersede the necessity of logical rules, it will likewise derive advantage from them.

I have not so much to say in favour of another branch of artificial assistance, though much stress has been sometimes laid upon it. We must not, however quite omit it: for an academic will be expected to know, that the learned have thought proper to give Greek names to certain forms and figures of speech, in the use of which the common people, without being aware of their skill in rhetoric, are little less expert than the learned themselves. When he can repeat these hard names, with their etymologies and significations, rhetoric can do but little more for him. The rules it professes to teach are in general needless to those who have genius, and useless to those who have none. If a youth has not a turn for eloquence, stuffing his head with the names of tropes and figures will not give it him. To know the names of the tools in an artificer's shop is one thing, but to have skill to use them as a workman is something very different. Here the tutor will use his discretion; for if any of his pupils are not likely to be orators, he will take care that, if he can prevent it, they shall not be pedants, or value themselves on retailing a list of technical terms, of which they know neither the use nor the application. At the best, too much attention to artificial rules will make but an artificial orator, and rather qualify the student to set off himself than his subject. The grand characteristic of the gospel-orator is simplicity. Many years have passed since I read Fenelon's treatise on Pulpit Eloquence; but I hope my tutor will put it into the hands of his pupils. It remains to inquire,

Fifthly, How the pupils are to be assisted and directed, that they may be able to preach *extempore*: An ability which I suppose to be ordinarily attainable by all who are called of God to preach the gospel, if they will diligently apply themselves to attain it, in the use of proper means. I do not expect they will succeed in this way to my wish, without prayer, study, effort, and practice. For as I have already hinted, I mean something more by it than speaking at random.

A well-known observation of Lord Bacon is much to my present purpose. It is to this effect: That reading makes a full man, writing an exact man, and speaking a ready man. The approved extempore preacher must have a fund of knowledge collected from various reading; and it would not be improper to read some books, with the immediate design of comparing his style and manner with approved models. It might be wished, that the best divines were always the best writers; but the style of many of them is quaint, involved, and obscure. Some books that are well written have little else to recommend them, yet may be useful for this purpose; and the periodical writings of Addison and Johnson abound with judicious observations on men and manners, besides being specimens of easy and elegant composition. Among writers in divinity I would recommend Dr Watts and Dr Witherspoon as good models. By perusing such authors with attention, I hope the pupils will acquire a taste for good writing, and be judges of a good style. Perspicuity, closeness, energy and ease, are the chief properties of such a style. On the contrary, a style that is either obscure, redundant, heavy, or affected, cannot be a good one. But I cannot advise them to copy the late Mr Hervey. His dress, though it fits him, and he does not look amiss in it, is rather too gaudy and ornamented for a divine. He had a fine imagination, an elegant taste, and shews much precision and judgment in his choice of words: but though his luxuriant manner of writing has many of the excellencies both of good poetry and good prose, it is in reality neither the one nor the other. An injudicious imitation of him has spoiled some persons for writers, who, if they could have been content with the plain and natural mode of expression, might have succeeded tolerably well.

The pupil likewise must write as well as read, and he should write frequently. Let him fill one common-place book after another, with extracts from good authors; this method, while it tends to fix the passages or their import in his mind, will also lead him to make such observations respecting the order, and construction, and force of words, as will not so readily occur to his notice by reading only. Then let him try his own hand, and accustom himself to write his thoughts, sometimes in notes and observations on the books he reads, sometimes in the form of essays or sermons. He will do well likewise to cultivate a correspondence with a few select friends; for epistolary writing seems nearest to that easiness of manner which a public speaker should aim at.

I would not have his first attempts to speak publicly be in the preaching way, or even upon spiritual subjects. It might probably abate the reverence due to divine truth, to employ it in efforts of ingenuity. Suppose the tutor should read to them a passage of history, and require them to repeat the relation to him the next day, in their own manner. He would then remark to them if they had omitted any essential part, or used improper expressions. Or they might be put upon making speeches or declamations on such occasions or incidents as he should propose. By degrees such of them as are judged to be truly spiritual and humble, might begin to speak upon a text of scripture, in the presence of the tutor and pupils; and I should hope this might, in due time, become a part of the morning or evening devotions in the family. But let them be especially cautioned not to trifle with holy things, nor profane the great subjects of scripture, by making them mere exhibitions and trials of skill.

Thus by combining much reading and writing with their attempts to speak, and all under the direction of a judicious tutor, I shall have a cheerful hope that the pupils will gradually attain a readiness and propriety of speech; and when actually sent out to preach, will approve themselves scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, qualified to bring forth from the treasury of their knowledge and experience, things new and old for the edification of their hearers.

And now I may draw towards a close. There are some branches of science, or what is so called, on which I lay but little stress. I have no great opinion of metaphysical studies. For pneumatology and ethics I would confine my pupils to the Bible. The researches of wise men in this way, which have not been governed by the word of God, have produced little but uncertainty, futility, or falsehood. My tutor will, I hope, think it sufficient to shew the pupils how successfully these wise and learned reasoners reciprocally refute each other's hypotheses. And if he informs them more in detail of the extravagancies which have been started concerning the nature and foundation of moral virtue; or of the dreams of philosophers, some of whom would exclude matter; and others would exclude mind out of the universe; he will inform them likewise, that he does not thereby mean properly to add to their stock of knowledge, (for we should in reality have been full as wise if these subtilties had never been heard of), but only to guard them against being led into the mazes of error and folly, by depending too much on the reveries of philosophers

After this delineation of my plan, it will be needless to inform you, that I do not propose my academy to be a spiritual hot-bed, in which the pupils shall be raised, and ripened into teachers, almost immediately upon their admission. I have allowed for a few excepted cases; but in general it is my design, that their education shall be comprehensive and exact. I would have them learn before they undertake to teach; and their sufficiency to be evidenced by a better testimonial than their own good opinion of themselves. A scribe well instructed, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, an able minister of the New Testament, are scriptural expressions, intimating what ought to be the qualifications of those who undertake the office of a preacher or pastor The apostle expressly forbids a novice to be employed in these services. And though in the present day this caution is very much disregarded by persons who undoubtedly mean well; yet I believe the neglect of scriptural rules (which are not arbitrary, but founded in a perfect knowledge of human nature) will always produce great inconveniences. I shall think a young man of tolerable abilities makes a very good improvement of his time, if the tutor finds him fit for actual service, after three or four years close attention to his studies.

But what have I done?—in compliance with your request, I have been led to give such an undisguised view of my sentiments on this interesting subject, that though I feel myself a cordial friend to all sides and parties who hold the Head, and agree in the grand principles of our common faith; I fear, lest some of every party will be displeased with me. I rely on your friendship and your knowledge of me to bear witness for me, that I would not willingly offend or grieve a single person. And you can likewise testify, that I did not set myself to work—that I was much surprised when you proposed it to me; and that you have reason to believe my regard for you, and for the design you informed me of, were the only motives of my venturing upon the task you assigned me.

I have by no means exhausted the subject, though I hope I have not omitted any thing that very materially relates to it. If I was really in Utopia, and to carry my plan into execution, other regulations would probably occur, which have at present escaped me.

—— res, ætas, usus,
Semper aliquid apportent novi.

What I have written I submit to the candour of you and your friends: adding my prayers, that the great Head of the church, the fountain of grace, and author of salvation, may direct your deliberations, and bless you with wisdom, unanimity, and success, in whatever you may attempt for the honour of his name, and the good of souls.

I am, dear Sir,

Your sincere Friend and Servant,
OMICRON.

May 14, 1782.

A

MONUMENT

TO THE PRAISE OF

THE LORD'S GOODNESS,

AND TO THE MEMORY OF

MISS ELIZA CUNNINGHAM,

THE LAST SURVIVING CHILD OF MR JAMES CUNINGHAM OF PITTARTHIE, FIFESHIRE.

Jesus amor meus est; si rideat, omnia rident.

O Death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor. xv 55.

PREFACE.

WHEN the following narrative was drawn up, the writer was aware that his feelings rendered him incompetent to judge, how much of a relation, every part of which was interesting to himself, might be fit to offer to the Public. Many little circumstances which the indulgence of a friend could bear with, might to strangers, appear trivial and impertinent. He therefore wrote only for his friends; and printed no more copies than he thought would be sufficient to distribute within the circle of his personal acquaintance. But as the paper has been much enquired after, and many of his friends have expressed their wish, that it might be more extensively circulated, he has at length yielded to their judgment.

It is to be lamented, that in this enlightened age, so signalized by the prevalence of a spirit of investigation, Religion should, by many, be thought the only subject unworthy of a serious inquiry; and that, while in every branch of science they studiously endeavour to trace every fact to its proper and adequate cause, and are cautious of admitting any theory which cannot stand the test of experiment, they treat the use of the term experimental, when applied to Religion, with contempt. Yet there are many things connected with this subject, in which, whether we are willing or unwilling, we are, and must be, nearly interested. Death, for instance, is inevitable. And if there be an hereafter, (and it is impossible to prove that there is not) the consequences of death must be important. Many persons die, as they live, thoughtless and careless what consequences may await them. Others, whose characters and conduct do not appear to have been worse than those of the former, cannot die so. They have dark and painful forebodings, and leave this world with reluctance and terror. And there are others, who, though conscious that they are sinners, and sure that they are about to enter upon an unchangeable and endless state of existence, possess peace, composure, and joy. These declare that they owe this happy state of mind to their dependence upon Jesus the Saviour, on whose blood and mediation they have built their hopes And who can possibly disprove their words! Such an instance is now in the Reader's hands. The fact is indubitable. A child under the age of fifteen did thus rejoice in the midst of pains and agonies, to the admiration of all who beheld her. She was willing to leave all her friends whom she dearly loved, and by whom she was tenderly beloved; for she knew in whom she believed, and that when she should be absent from the body, she would be present with the Lord. With this assurance, she triumphed in the prospect of glory, and smiled upon the approach of death.

It may be presumed, that whoever seriously considers this case, will not be able to satisfy himself, by ascribing such remarkable effects, in so young a subject, to the power of habit, example, or system. If he does not account for them upon the principles of the gospel, he will be unable to assign any proportionable cause. And it is to be feared, that if he is not affected by a testimony so simple and so striking, neither would he be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.

HOXTON, Nov. 17, 1785.

A

MONUMENT, &c.

As I write not for the eye of the public, but chiefly to put a testimony of the Lord's goodness into the hands of my dear friends who have kindly afforded us their sympathy and prayers on the late occasion; I do not mean either to restrain the emotions of my heart, or to apologize for them. I shall write simply and freely, as I might speak to a person, to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully entrust myself, and who I know will bear with all my weaknesses.

In May 1782, my sister Cuningham was at Edinburgh, chiefly on the account of her eldest daughter, then in the fourteenth year of her age, who was very ill of a consumption. She had already buried an only son, at the age of twelve; and while all a mother's care and feelings were engaged by the rapid decline of a second amiable child, she was unexpectedly and suddenly bereaved of an affectionate and excellent husband. Her trials were great, but the Lord had prepared her for them. She was a believer. Her faith was strong, her graces active, and her conduct exemplary. She walked with God, and he supported her. And though she was a tender and sympathizing friend, she had a happy firmness of temper, so that her character as a christian, and the propriety of her behaviour in every branch of relative life, appeared with peculiar advantage in the season of affliction. She returned to Anstruther a widow, with her sick child, who languished till October, and then died.

Though my sister had many valuable and pleasing connections in Scotland, yet her strongest tie being broken, she readily accepted my invitation to come and live with us. She was not only dear to me as Mrs Newton's sister, but we had lived long in the habits of intimate friendship. I knew her worth, and she was partial to me. She had yet one child remaining, her dear Eliza. We already had a dear orphan niece, whom we had, about seven years before, adopted for our own daughter. My active fond imagination anticipated the time of her arrival, and drew a pleasing picture of the addition the company of such a sister, such a friend, would make to the happiness of our family. The children likewise—there was no great disparity between them either in years or stature. From what I had heard of Eliza, I was prepared to love her before I saw her; though she came afterwards into my hands like a heap of untold gold, which, when counted over, proves to be a larger sum than was expected. My fancy paired and united these children; I hoped that the friendship between us and my sister would be perpetuated in them. I seemed to see them like twin sisters, of one heart and mind, habited nearly alike, always together, always with us.—Such was my plan—but the Lord's plan was very different, and therefore mine failed. It is happy for us, poor short-sighted creatures, unable as we are to foresee the consequences of our own wishes, that if we know and trust him, he often is pleased to put a merciful negative upon our purposes; and condescends to chuse better for us than we can for ourselves. What might have been the issue of my plan, could it have taken place, I know not; but I can now praise and adore him for the gracious issue of his. I praise his name, that I can cheerfully comply with his word, which says, "Be still, and know that I am God." I not only can bow (as it becomes a creature and a sinner to do) to his sovereignty; but I admire his wisdom and goodness, and can say from my heart, "He has done all things well."

My sister had settled her affairs previous to her removal, and nothing remained but to take leave of her friends, of whom she had many, not only in Anstruther, but in different parts of the county. In February 1783, I received a letter from her, which, before I opened it, I expected was to inform me that she was upon the road in her way to London. But the information was, that in a little journey she had made to bid a friend farewell, she had caught a violent cold, which brought on a fever and a cough, with other symptoms, which, though she described them as gently as possible, that we might not be alarmed, obliged me to give up instantly the pleasing hope of seeing her. Succeeding letters confirmed my apprehensions, her malady increas-

ed, and she was soon confined to her bed. Eliza was at school at Musselburgh. Till then she had enjoyed a perfect state of health; but while her dear mother was rapidly declining, she likewise caught a great cold, and her life likewise was soon thought to be in danger. On this occasion, that fortitude and resolution which so strongly marked my sister's character, was remarkably displayed. She knew that her own race was almost finished; she earnestly desired that Eliza might live or die with us. And the physicians advised a speedy removal into the south. Accordingly, to save time, and to save Eliza from the impressions which the sight of a dying parent might probably make upon her spirits, and possibly apprehensive that the interview might make too great an impression upon her own; she sent this her only beloved child from Edinburgh directly to London, without letting her come home to take a last leave of her. She contented herself with committing and bequeathing her child to our care and love in a letter, which I believe was the last she was able to write.

Thus powerfully recommended by the pathetic charge of a dying mother, the dearest friend we had upon earth, and by that plea for compassion which her illness might have strongly urged even upon strangers, we received our dear Eliza as a trust, and as a treasure on the 15th of March. My sister lived long enough to have the comfort of knowing, not only that she was safely arrived, but was perfectly pleased with her new situation. She was now freed from all earthly cares. She suffered much in the remaining part of her illness, but she knew whom she believed; she possessed a peace past understanding, and a hope full of glory. She entered into the joy of her Lord on the 10th of May 1783, respected and regretted by all who knew her.

I soon perceived that the Lord had sent me a treasure indeed. Eliza's person was agreeable. There was an ease and elegance in her whole address, and a gracefulness in her movements, till long illness and great weakness bowed her down. Her disposition was lively, her genius quick and inventive, and if she had enjoyed health, she probably would have excelled in every thing she attempted that required ingenuity. Her understanding, particularly her judgment, and her sense of propriety was far above her years. There was something in her appearance which usually procured her favour at first sight. She was honoured by the notice of several persons of distinction, which, though I thankfully attribute in part to their kindness to me, I believe was a good deal owing to something rather uncommon in her. But her principal endearing qualities, which could be only fully known to us who lived with her, were the sweetness of her temper, and a heart formed for the exercise of affection, gratitude, and friendship. Whether, when at school, she might have heard sorrowful tales from children, who having lost their parents, met with a great difference, in point of tenderness, when they came under the direction of uncles and aunts, and might think that all uncles and aunts were alike, I know not; but I have understood since from herself, that she did not come to us with any highly raised expectations of the treatment she was to meet with. But as she found (the Lord in mercy to her and to us having opened our hearts to receive her) that it was hardly possible for her own parents to have treated her more tenderly, and that it was from that time the business and the pleasure of our lives, to study how to oblige her, and how to alleviate the afflictions which we were unable to remove; so we likewise quickly found, that the seeds of our kindness could hardly be sown in a more promising and fruitful soil. I know not that either her aunt or I ever saw a cloud upon her countenance during the time she was with us. It is true we did not, we could not unnecessarily cross her; but if we thought it expedient to over-rule any proposal she made, she acquiesced with a sweet smile; and we were certain that we should never hear of that proposal again. Her delicacy however was quicker than our observation; and she would sometimes say, when we could not perceive the least reason for it, "I am afraid I answered you peevishly; indeed I did not intend it; if I did, I ask your pardon; I should be very ungrateful, if I thought any pleasure equal to that of endeavouring to please you." It is no wonder that we dearly loved such a child!

Wonderful is the frame of the human heart. —The Lord claims and deserves it all; yet there is still room for all the charities of relative life, and scope for their full play; and they are capable of yielding the sincerest pleasures this world can afford, if held in subordination to what is supremely due to him. The marriage relation, when cemented by a divine blessing, is truly a union of hearts, and the love resulting from it will admit of no competition in the same kind. Children have the next claim; and whether there be one, or two, or many, each one seems to be the object of the whole of the parent's love. Perhaps my friends who have children, may think that I who never had any, can only talk by guess upon this subject. I presume not to dispute the point with them. But when it pleased the Lord to put my dear Betsey under my care, I seemed to acquire a new set of feelings, if not exactly those of a parent, yet, as I conceive, not altogether unlike them. And I long thought it was not possible for me to love any child as I did her. But when Eliza came, she, without being her rival, quickly participated with her in the same affection.

I found I had room enough for them both, without prejudice to either. I loved the one very dearly, and the other no less than before; if it were possible still more, when I saw that she entered into my views, received and behaved to her cousin with great affection, and ascribed many little indulgencies and attentions, which were shewn her, to their proper ground, the consideration of her ill state of health, and not to any preference that could operate to her disadvantage. For the Lord was pleased to answer my prayers in this respect so graciously, that I could not perceive that any jealousy or suspicion took place between them, on either side, from first to last.

The hectic fever, cough, and sweats, which Eliza brought with her from Scotland, were subdued in the course of the summer, and there appeared no reason to apprehend that she would be taken off very suddenly. But still there was a worm preying upon the root of this pretty gourd. She had seldom any severe pain till within the last fortnight of her life, and usually slept well, but when awake she was always ill. I believe she knew not a single hour of perfect ease; and they who intimately knew her state, could not but wonder to see her so placid, cheerful, attentive when in company, as she generally was. Many a time when the tears have silently stolen down her cheeks, if she saw that her aunt or I observed her, she would wipe them away, come to us with a smile and a kiss, and say, "Do not be uneasy, I am not very ill, I can bear it, I shall be better presently," or to that effect.

Her case was thought beyond the reach of medicine, and for a time no medicine was used. She had air and exercise, as the weather and circumstances would permit. For the rest, she amused herself as well as she could, with her guitar or harpsichord, with her needle, and with reading. She had a part likewise, when able, in such visits as we paid or received. And our visits were generally regulated by a regard to what she could bear. Her aunt especially, seldom went abroad, but at such times, and to such places, as we thought agreeable and convenient to her. For we could perceive that she loved home best, and best of all when we were at home with her.

In April 1784, we put her under the care of my dear friend Dr Benamor. To the blessing of the Lord on his skill and endeavours, I ascribe the pleasure of having her continued with us so long; nor can I sufficiently express my gratitude for his assiduous unwearied attention, nor for his great tenderness. She is now gone, and can no more repeat what she has often spoken, of the great comfort it was to her to have so affectionate and sympathizing a physician; but whileI live, I hope it will always be my pleasure to acknowledge our great obligations to him on her account. I should be ungrateful, likewise, were I to omit mentioning the kindness of Dr Allen of Dulwich, who attended her daily during her last stay at Southampton. He was so obliging, likewise, as to visit her, and to meet Dr Benamor upon her case, after her return to London. Their joint prescriptions were carefully followed. But what can the most efficacious medicines, or the best physicians, avail to prolong life, when the hour approaches, in which the prayer of the great Intercessor must be accomplished, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory." This was the proper cause of my dear Eliza's death. The Lord sent this child to me to be brought up for him; he owned my poor endeavours; and when her education was completed, and she was ripened for heaven, he took her home to himself. He has richly paid me my wages, in the employment itself, and in the happy issue.

Dr Benamor advising a trial of the salt water, we passed the month of August 1784 with her, partly at Mr Walter Taylor's at Southampton, and partly at Charles Etty's, Esq. of Priestlands near Lymington. While she was with these kind and generous friends, she had every accommodation and assistance that could be thought of or wished for. And the bathing was evidently useful, so far as to give some additional strength to her very weak and relaxed frame, which assisted her in going more comfortably through the last winter. We were therefore encouraged and advised to repeat our visit to Southampton this autumn. But the success was not the same. Her feet and legs had already begun to swell, and the evening before she set out she caught cold, which brought on a return of the fever and cough: and though Dr Allen was successful in removing these symptoms in about a fortnight, and she bathed a few times, she could not persevere. However the advantages of situation, air, and exercise, being much greater than she could have in London, and as we were with friends whom she, as well as we, dearly loved, she continued at Southampton six weeks. But she was unable to proceed to Mr Etty's, who was very desirous of repeating his former kindness. The Lord strengthened her to perform her journey home without inconvenience. She returned the 16th of September; then she entered our door for the last time, for she went out no more, till she was carried out to be put into the hearse.

I have thus got together, in one view, a brief account of what relates to her illness, till within the last three weeks of her pilgrimage. I now come to what is much more important and interesting. Her excellent parents had conscientiously endeavoured to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the principles of religion had been instilled into her from her infancy. Their labours

were thus far attended with success, that no child could be more obedient or obliging, or more remote from evil habits, or evil tempers; but I could not perceive, when she first came to us, that she had any heart-affecting sense of divine things. But being under my roof, she of course, when her health would permit, attended on my ministry, and was usually present when I prayed and expounded the scriptures, morning and evening, in the family. Friends and ministers were likewise frequently with us, whose character and conversation were well suited to engage her notice, and to help her to form a right idea of the christian principles and temper. Knowing that she was of a thinking turn, I left her to make her own reflections upon what she saw and heard, committing her to the Lord, from whom I had received her, and entreating him to be her effectual teacher. When I did attempt to talk with her upon the concerns of her soul, she could give me no answer but with tears. But I soon had great encouragement to hope that the Lord had both enlightened her understanding, and had drawn the desires of her heart to himself. Great was her delight in the ordinances, exemplary her attention under the preaching. To be debarred from going to hear at our stated times, was a trial, which, though she patiently bore, seemed to affect her more than any other; and she did not greatly care what she endured in the rest of the week, provided she was well enough to attend the public worship. The judicious observations she occasionally made upon what had passed in conversation, upon incidents, books, and sermons, indicated a sound scriptural judgment, and a spiritual taste.—And my hope was confirmed by her whole deportment, which was becoming the gospel of Christ. So that had she died suddenly, on any day within about a year and a half past, I should have had no doubt that she had passed from death unto life. But I could seldom prevail with her to speak of herself; if she did, it was with the greatest diffidence and caution.

Soon after her return from Southampton, she became acquainted with acute pain, to which she had till then been much a stranger. Her gentle spirit, which had borne up under a long and languishing illness, was not so capable of supporting pain. It did not occasion any improper temper or language, but it wore her away apace. Friday, the 30th of September, she was down stairs for the last time, and then she was brought down and carried up in arms.

It now became very desirable to hear from herself a more explicit account of the hope that was in her; especially as upon some symptoms of an approaching mortification, she appeared to be a little alarmed, and of course not thoroughly reconciled to the thoughts of death. Her aunt waited for the first convenient opportunity of intimating to her the probability that the time of her departure was at hand. The next morning (Saturday the 1st of October) presented one. She found herself remarkably better, her pains were almost gone, her spirits revived, and the favourable change was visible in her countenance. Her aunt began to break the subject to her by saying, "My dear, were you not extremely ill last night!" She said, "Indeed I was." "Had you not been relieved I think you could not have continued long." "I believe I could not." "My dear, I have been very anxiously concerned for your life." "But I hope, my dear aunt, you are not so now." She then opened her mind and spoke freely. I cannot repeat the whole: the substance was to this effect. "My views of things have been for some time very different from what they were when I came to you. I have seen and felt the vanity of childhood and youth." Her aunt said, "I believe you have long made conscience of secret prayer." She answered, "Yes, I have long and earnestly sought the Lord with reference to the change which is now approaching. I have not yet that full assurance which is so desirable, but I have a hope, I trust a good hope, and I believe the Lord will give me whatever he sees necessary for me, before he takes me from hence. I have prayed to him to fit me for himself, and then, whether sooner or later, it signifies but little." Here was a comfortable point gained. We were satisfied that she had given up all expectations of living, and could speak of her departure without being distressed.

It will not be expected that a child at her age should speak systematically. Nor had she learnt her religion from a system or form of words, however sound. The Lord himself was her teacher. But from what little she had at different times said to me, I was well satisfied that she had received a true conviction of the evil of sin, and of of her own state by nature as a sinner. When she spoke of the Lord, she meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd, who gathers such lambs in his arm, and carries them in his bosom. She believed him to be God and man in one person, and that hope, of which she shall never be ashamed, was founded on his atonement, grace, and power. As I do not intend to put words into her mouth, which she never spoke, I mention this, lest any person should be disappointed at not finding a certain phraseology, which they may have been accustomed to.

Her apparent revival was of short duration. In the evening of the same day, she began to complain of a sore throat, which became worse, and before Sunday noon threatened an absolute suffocation.—When Dr Benamor, who the day before had almost entertained hopes of her recovery, found her so suddenly and greatly altered, he could not, at the mo-

ment prevent some signs of his concern from appearing in his countenance. She quickly perceived it, and desired he would plainly tell her his sentiments. When he had recovered himself he said, "You are not so well as when I saw you on Saturday." She answered, "that she trusted all would be well soon." He replied, "that whether she lived or died, it would be well, and to the glory of God." He told me that he had much pleasing conversation with her that morning, some particulars of which he had committed to writing, but he lost the paper. —From that time she may be said to have been dying, as we expected her departure from one hour to another.

On Monday the 3d she was almost free from any complaint in her throat, but there was again an appearance of a mortification in her legs, which was again repelled by the means which Dr Benamor prescribed. I recollect but little of the incidents of this day. In general she was in great pain, sometimes in agonies, unable to remain many minutes in the same position. But her mind was peaceful; she possessed a spirit of recollection and prayer; and her chief attention to earthly things seemed confined to the concern she saw in those who were around her. That she might not increase their feelings for her, she strove to conceal the sense of her own sufferings. It pleased the Lord wonderfully to support my dear Mrs Newton, and she had a tolerable night's rest, though I did not expect the child would live till morning. On Tuesday the 4th, about nine in the morning, we all thought her dying, and waited near two hours by her bed-side for her last breath. She was much convulsed and in great agonies. I said, "My dear, you are going to heaven, and I hope, by the grace of God, we in due time shall follow you." She could not speak, but let us know that she attended to what I said by a gentle nod of her head, and a sweet smile. I repeated to her many passages of scripture, and verses of hymns, to each of which she made the same kind of answer. Though silent, her looks were more expressive than words. Towards eleven o'clock, a great quantity of coagulated phlegm, which she had not the strength to bring up, made her rattle violently in the throat, which we considered as a sign that death was at hand: and as she seemed unwilling to take something that was offered her, we were loth to disturb her in her last moments (as we supposed) by pressing her. I think she must have died in a quarter of an hour, had not Dr Benamor just then come into the room. He felt her pulse, and observed that she was not near death by her pulse, and desired something might be given her. She was perfectly sensible, though still unable to speak, but expressed her unwillingness to take any thing, by very strong efforts. However she yielded to entreaty, and a teaspoonful or two of some liquid soon cleared the passage, and she revived. Her pain however was extreme, and her disappointment great. I never saw her so near impatient as upon this occasion: as soon as she could speak she cried, "Oh cruel, cruel, to recal me, when I was so happy and so near gone! I wish you had not come; I long to go home.' But in a few minutes she grew composed, assented to what the Doctor said, of her duty to wait the Lord's time; and from that hour, though her desires to depart and to be with her Saviour, were stronger and stronger, she cheerfully took whatever was offered her, and frequently asked for something of her own accord. How often, if we were to have our choice, should we counteract our own prayers! I had entreated the Lord to prolong her life, till she could leave an indisputable testimony behind her, for our comfort. Yet when I saw her agony, and heard her say, "Oh! how cruel to stop me!" I was for a moment almost of her mind, and could hardly help wishing that the Doctor had delayed his visit a little longer. But if she had died then, we should have been deprived of what we saw and heard the two following days, the remembrance of which is now much more precious to me than silver or gold.

When the Doctor came on Wednesday, she entreated him to tell her how long he thought she might live; he said, "Are you in earnest, my dear?" She answered, "Indeed I am." At that time there were great appearances that a mortification was actually begun. He therefore told her, he thought it possible she might hold out till eight in the evening, but did not expect she could survive midnight at farthest. On hearing him say so, low as she was, her eyes seemed to sparkle with their former vivacity, and fixing them on him with an air of ineffable satisfaction, she said, "Oh, that is good news indeed!" And she repeated it as such to a person who came soon after into the room, and said with lively emotions of joy, "The Doctor tells me I shall stay here but a few hours more." In the afternoon she noticed and counted the clock, I believe, every time it struck, and when it struck seven, she said, "Another hour, and then." But it pleased the Lord to spare her to us another day.

She suffered much in the course of Wednesday night, but was quite resigned and patient. Our kind servants, who, from their love to her and to us, watched her night and day with a solicitude and tenderness which wealth is too poor to purchase, were the only witnesses of the affectionate and grateful manner in which she repeatedly thanked them for their service and attention to her. Though such an acknowledgement was no more than their due, yet coming from herself, and at such a time they highly valued it. She added her earnest prayers that the Lord would reward them. To her prayers my heart says, Amen. May

they be comforted of the Lord in their dying hours, as she was, and meet with equal kindness from those about them!

I was surprised on Thursday morning to find her not only alive, but in some respects better. The tokens of mortification again disappeared. This was her last day, and it was a memorable day to us. When Dr Benamor asked her how she was? She answered, "Truly happy, and if this he dying, it is a pleasant thing to die." [The very expression which a dear friend of mine used upon her death-bed a few years ago.] She said to me about ten o'clock, "My dear uncle, I would not change conditions with any person upon earth; Oh how gracious is the Lord to me! Oh what a change is before me!" She was several times asked, if she could wish to live, provided the Lord should restore her to perfect health; her answer was, "Not for all the world," and sometimes, "Not for a thousand worlds."* "Do not weep for me, my dear aunt, but rather rejoice and praise on my account. I shall now have the advantage of dear Miss Patty Barham (for whom she had a very tender affection, and who has been long in a languishing state), for I shall go before her." We asked her if she would chuse a text for her own funeral sermon? She readily mentioned, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. That, said she, has been my experience, my afflictions have been many, but not one too many; nor has the greatest of them been too great, I praise him for them all." But after a pause she said, "Stay, I think there is another text which may do better; let it be, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. That is my experience now." She likewise chose a hymn to be sung after the sermon. Olney Hymns, book II. hymn 72.

But I must check myself, and set down but a small part of the gracious words which the Lord enabled her to speak in the course of the day, though she was frequently interrupted by pains and agonies. She had something to say either in the way of admonition or consolation, as she thought most suitable, to every one whom she saw. To her most constant attendant she said, "Be sure you continue to call upon the Lord, and if you think he does not hear you now, he will at last, as he has heard me." She spoke a great deal to an intimate friend, who was with her every day, which I hope she will long remember, as the testimony of her dying Eliza. Amongst other things, she said, "See how comfortable the Lord can make a dying bed! Do you think that you shall have such an assurance when you come to die?" Being answered, "I hope so, my dear," she replied, "But do you earnestly and with all your heart pray to the Lord for it? If you seek him, you shall surely find him." She then prayed affectionately and fervently for her friend, afterwards for her cousin, and then for another of our family who was present. Her prayer was not long, but her every word was weighty, and her manner very affecting—the purport was, that they might all be taught and comforted by the Lord. About five in the afternoon she desired me to pray with her once more. Surely I then prayed from my heart. When I had finished, she said, Amen. I said, "My dear child, have I expressed your meaning?" she answered, "Oh yes!" and then added, "I am ready to say, Why are his chariot-wheels so long in coming! But I hope he will enable me to wait his hour with patience." These were the last words I heard her speak.

Mrs Newton's heart was much, perhaps too much, attached to this dear child; which is not to be wondered at, considering what a child she was, and how long and how much she had suffered. But the Lord graciously supported her in this trying season. Indeed there was much more cause for joy than for grief; yet the pain of separation will be felt. Eliza well knew her feelings, and a concern for her was, I believe, the last anxiety that remained with her. She said to those about her, "Try to persuade my aunt to leave the room; I think I shall soon go to sleep, I shall not remain with you till the morning." Her aunt, however, was the last person who heard her speak, and was sitting by her bed when she went away. A little past six, hearing that a relation who dearly loved her, and was beloved by her, and who had come daily from Westminster to see her, was below stairs, she said, "Raise me up, that I may speak to him once more." Her aunt said, "My dear, you are nearly exhausted, I think you had better not attempt it." She smiled, and said, "It is very well, I will not." She was then within half an hour of her translation to glory, but the love of our dear Lord had so filled her with benevolence, that she was ready to exert herself to her last breath, in hopes of saying something that might be useful to others after she was gone.

Towards seven o'clock, I was walking in the garden, and earnestly engaged in prayer for her, when a servant came to me and said, "She is gone." O Lord, how great is thy power! how great is thy goodness! A few days before, had it been practicable and lawful, what would I not have given to procure her recovery? Yet seldom in my life have I known a more heart-felt joy, than when these words, *She is gone*, sounded in my ears. I ran up stairs, and our whole little family were soon around her bed.—Though her aunt and another person were sitting with their eyes fixed upon her, she was gone perhaps a few minutes before she was missed. She lay upon her left side, with her cheek gently reclining upon her hand, as if in a sweet sleep. And I thought there was a smile upon her counte-

* The last time she was asked this question, she said (as I have been since informed), "I desire to have no choice."

nance. Never surely did death appear in a more beautiful, inviting form! We fell upon our knees, and I returned (I think I may say) my most unfeigned thanks to our God and Saviour, for his abundant goodness to her, crowned in this last instance, by giving her so gentle a dismission. Yes, I am satisfied. I am comforted. And if one of the many involuntary tears I have shed, could have recalled her to life, to health, to an assemblage of all that this world could contribute to her happiness, I would have laboured hard to suppress it. Now my largest desires for her are accomplished. The days of her mourning are ended. She is landed on that peaceful shore, where the storms of trouble never blow. She is for ever out of the reach of sorrow, sin, temptation, and snares. Now she is before the throne! she sees Him whom not having seen she loved; she drinks of the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand, and shall thirst no more.

She was born at St Margaret's, Rochester, Feb. 6, 1771. Her parents settled at Anstruther, in Fife, in 1773. She returned to us————March 15, 1783. She breathed her spirit into her Redeemer's hands a little before seven in the evening, on Oct. 6, 1785, aged fourteen years and eight months.

I shall be glad if this little narrative may prove an encouragement to my friends who have children.—May we not conceive the Lord saying to us, as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child, and bring it up for me, and I will pay thee thy wages?" How solemn the trust! How important and difficult the discharge of it! but how rich the reward if our endeavours are crowned with success! And we have every thing to hope from his power and goodness, if, in dependence upon his blessing, we can fully and diligently aim at fulfilling his will. Happy they who will say at the last day, "Behold here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

The children of my friends will likewise see my narrative. May it convince them that it is practicable, and good, to seek the Lord betimes! My dear Eliza's state of languor prevented her from associating with young people of her own age, so frequently and freely as she might otherwise have done. But these papers will come into the hands of some such, whom she knew, and whom she loved. To them, I particularly commend and dedicate this relation. O my dear young friends, had you seen with what dignity of spirit she filled up the last scene of her life, you must have been affected by it! Let not the liveliness of your spirits, and the gaity of the prospect around you, prevent you from considering, that to you likewise, days will certainly come (unless you are suddenly snatched out of life) when you will say and feel, that the world, and all in it, can afford you no pleasure. But there is a Saviour, and a mighty One, always near, alway gracious to those who seek him. May you, like her, be enabled to chuse him, as the Guide of your youth, and the Lord of your hearts. Then like her, you will find support and comfort under affliction, wisdom to direct your conduct, a good hope in death, and by death a happy translation to everlasting life.

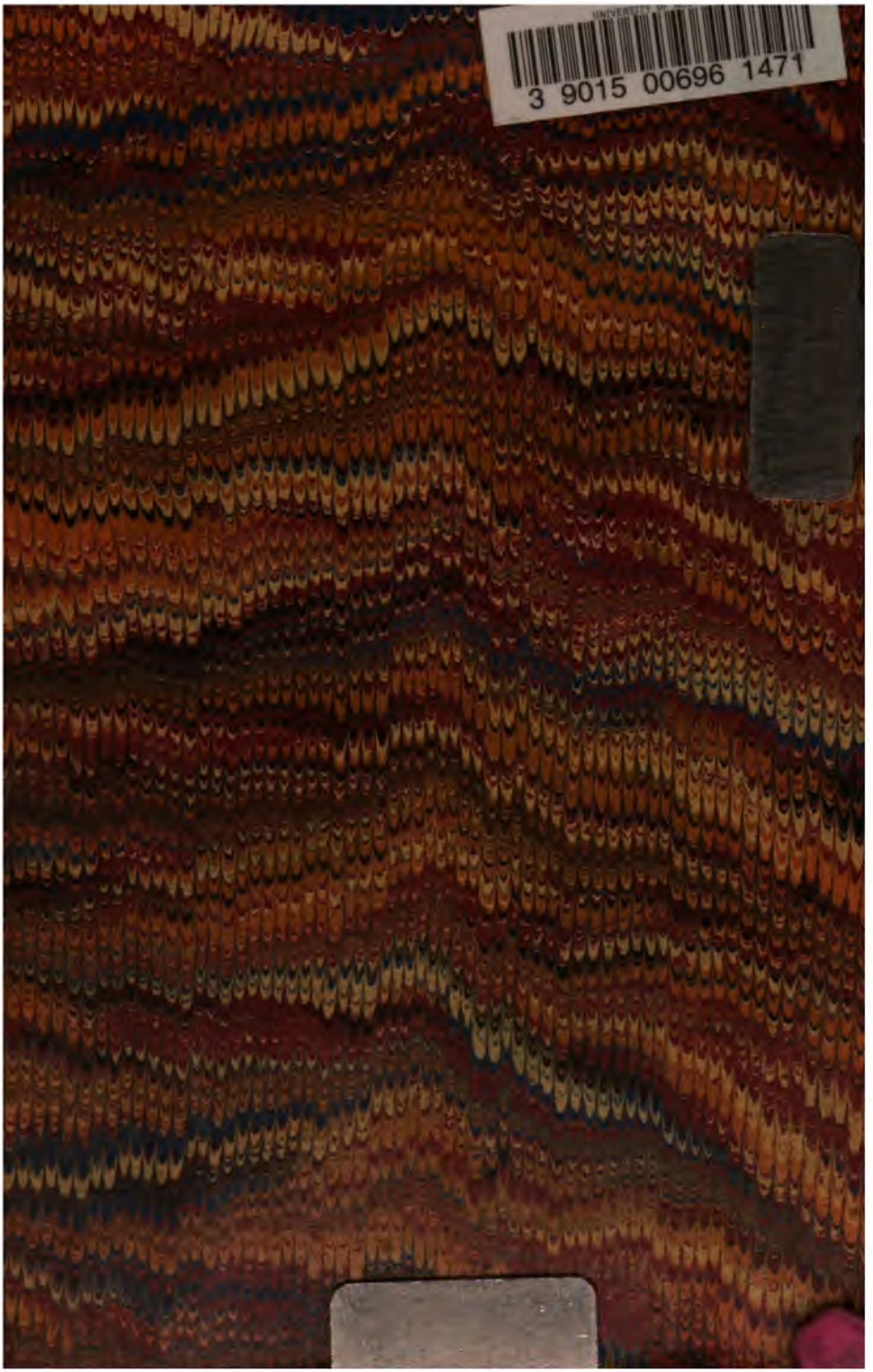
I have only to add my prayers, that a blessing from on high may descend upon the persons and families of all my friends, and upon all into whose hands this paper may providentially come.

JOHN NEWTON.

Charles's-Square, Hoxton,
Oct. 13, 1785.

THE END.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY T. NELSON AND SONS.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